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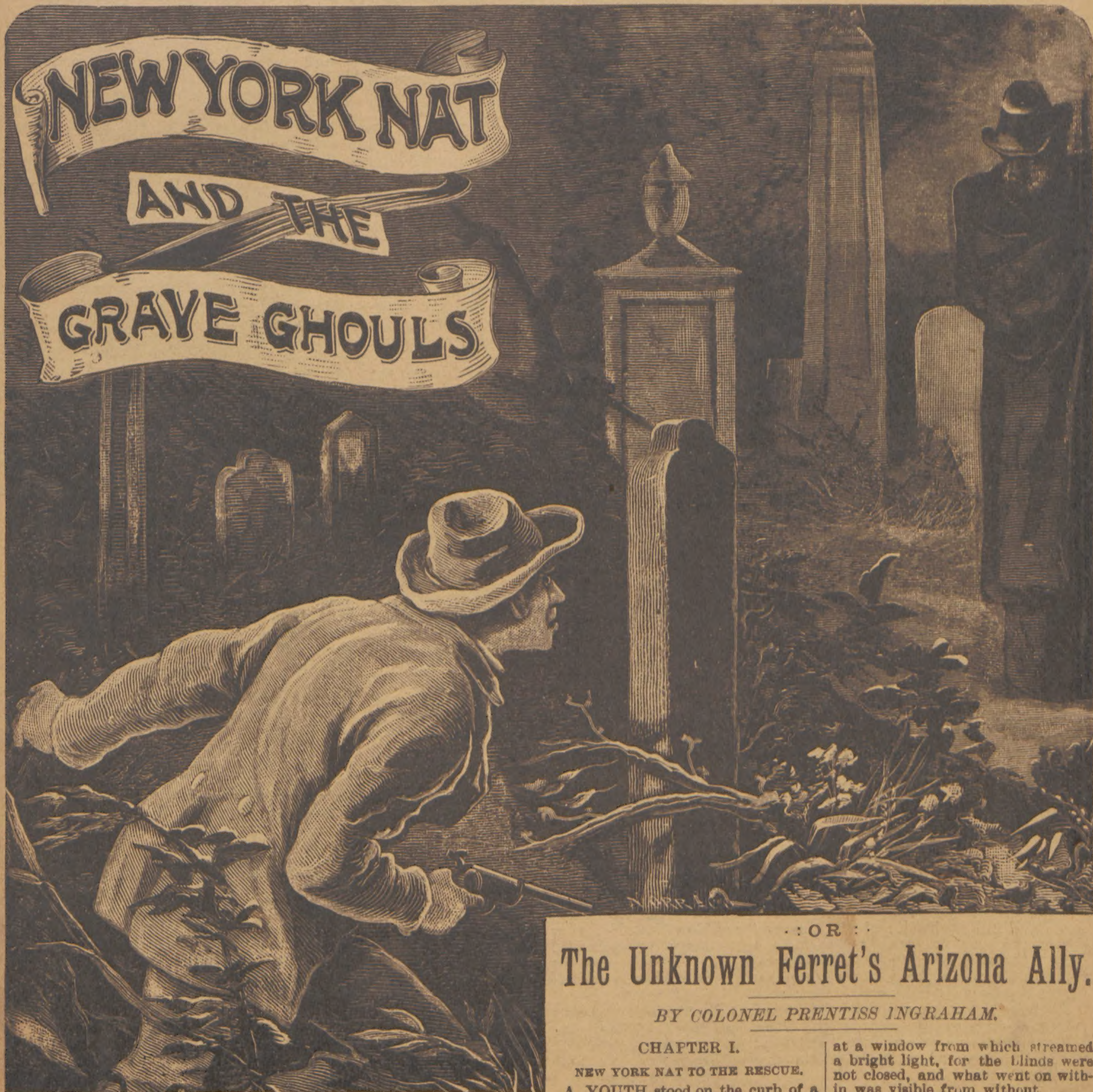
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SPREADING HIS MEN OUT, NAT BEGAN SLOWLY TO ADVANCE UPON
THE GRAVE GHOULS.

...OR... The Unknown Ferret's Arizona Ally.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

NEW YORK NAT TO THE RESCUE.

A YOUTH stood on the curb of a
fashionable New York street,
gazing with considerable interest up

at a window from which streamed
a bright light, for the blinds were
not closed, and what went on with-
in was visible from without.

What the young man beheld
seemed to rivet his attention won-

derfully, for he stood like a statue, his eyes fixed, his whole face indicative of strongest interest.

Suddenly the blinds were closed with a bang and no longer was the interior of the room visible.

But the youth still lingered, his eyes fastened as before upon the now darkened window.

From his position the light of a street lamp fell full upon him, revealing a face that was a study.

It was a handsome face, young in years, yet old in experience, one to observe in any crowd, one to regard with admiration and respect.

He was well dressed, not differently from other youths about town, and yet he had a stamp peculiarly his own.

As he stood there regarding the house the door opened and a man came hastily out.

The youth followed him down the street to a cab-stand at Thirty-third street and Broadway, and saw him speak to a cabman, spring in and drive away.

At once the youth sprang into another cab and said to the driver:

"Keep that cab in sight."

The first one stopped at the very house the youth had been watching, and the shadower drove slowly, turned and repassed just as three men came out, two of them supporting the one between them, and who staggered as though very much under the influence of liquor.

"A bad case of drunk, cabman; but, we must take him home. Drive to the Wall Street Ferry," ordered one of the men.

The cab rolled away and the other followed.

At the ferry the three men got out, the one who was intoxicated in a seemingly worse condition than when he left the house.

The cabman was dismissed with a fee that pleased him, one of the men remarking:

"Come, brace up, old man, for we'll walk you about to sober you up," and they began to almost drag him along.

It was just growing light with the approach of day, and the men dragged their almost unconscious companion out upon the end of a pier, but they failed to see that the other cab had been dismissed and that its occupant was now shadowing them on foot, dodging from place to place to prevent being seen.

At the end of the dock they halted, and as they did so the young shadower slipped into the water and swam toward the end where the others stood.

He was under the pier, so was not seen by them, and he heard the words:

"Let him go; he fell over himself, you know."

And over the edge of the pier rolled the almost unconscious man, falling with a heavy splash into the river, while on the pier over the head of the bold swimmer beneath, was heard the sound of rapid footsteps hurrying away from the scene of a tragedy.

The youth made no outcry of "man overboard," gave no call for help, but hardly had the form sunk beneath the waters when he grasped it in his strong arms, and at once swam toward another pier, where, in the early light, he saw some men getting a vessel under way.

He swam well and strong, with his heavy burden, reached the dock and called to the men to lower a rope, saying that his friend had lost his footing on the other pier and fallen into the river.

Help was at hand, and the unconscious man and his young rescuer were drawn safely up on the pier. Then a man ran to the ferry for a hack, the youth saying that he would take his friend home.

The cold water had revived the man greatly, though he still seemed dazed. The men set it down as a case of drunk and went on board their vessel, which at once swung off from the pier.

"What has happened?" asked the man in a low tone, speaking with an effort.

"You fell overboard from the pier, and I pulled you out, and now I am taking you to where you will be well cared for."

"Take me to—no! no! do not take me there, for they will kill me!"

"And, tell me, did I fall over the pier, or was I thrown over?" the man asked eagerly, passing his hand across his face in a way that showed he found it hard to recall what had happened.

"You were thrown over," was the cool reply of the youth.

"My God! They tried to murder me, and you have saved my life! Who are you, boy?"

"My chums call me New York Nat," was the quiet reply.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY POLICE LEAGUE.

IN a certain part of New York City, not far from the shores of the Hudson, surrounded by houses and the bustle of business, stands an old mansion that dates back a hundred years, and behind it is a burying ground deserted by those whose dead lie there for many long years and left to go to decay until the City Fathers decide what is to be done with this Village of the Dead in the city of the living.

The old house is walled in, its grounds overgrown with rank undergrowth and weeds, its halls deserted, its gates padlocked and even in their practical days the neighbors living near look with awe upon the once grand mansion and assert that it is haunted.

They tell of its past history, of murders committed there, and of dark deeds done under its roof, while its former owner was a miser, hiding away his riches there to have them in the end cost him his life, and the old place was left for the coming of the heir some day, when it would bring her a fortune, for the heir was said to be a young girl.

That any one would dare invade the gloomy grounds and the old mansion few would believe, and all shunned the adjoining cemetery as well; but had there been any one on the watch, the night following the rescue by the youth, who called himself New York Nat, of the victim of some one's hate or greed, they would have seen in the darkness and rain, forms gliding toward the old mansion, scaling its surrounding high wall, and disappearing in the gloom of the dense foliage.

The rain was falling with steady patter upon the leaves, the night was intensely dark, here and there a sickly glare came from a street-lamp, or house in the neighborhood, and no sound was heard save the rumble of wheels in the busier part of the city, or the whistle of some boat upon the river, for the hour was nearing midnight.

These forms, enveloped in storm-coats, crept through the grounds, as though familiar with them, and soon formed a group under the roof of a small piazza in the rear, one end of which sheltered a basement door.

There were half a score in the group, and they stood as silent as the spooks with which the superstitious said the mansion was peopled.

Suddenly there appeared in their midst a slender form, also closely muffled, and half a dozen voices whispered:

"It's the Queen."

"Yes, boys, and I will let you in, for New York Nat, your captain, was detained, but will soon be here."

The voice was low and sweet, and at her words the group raised their dripping hats in polite salute.

Thrusting a heavy key into the basement door the last comer threw it open, entered, struck a match and lighted a lantern found there, its rays falling upon the group and causing them to present a strange and

picturesque gathering, looking for all the world like a band of spooks.

Through the basement, up to the floor above the leader went with the lantern carrying fantastic shadows of the band that followed, and so on up to a centrally located room in the attic.

The old house had been left furnished, but time had played sad havoc with the furniture, the heavy curtains, and, in fact, upon all.

But there were seats enough for the band, placed in a semicircle around a table, before which were two old-fashioned chairs.

A lamp on the table was lighted, and its rays revealed those who had assembled there in that old mansion.

They were youths, ranging from twelve years of age up to twenty, and all sizes and conditions, too, as their appearance indicated.

They threw off their outer wraps that were dripping wet, and their costumes were varied, for there was one in the dress of a messenger-boy, another as a call-boy in a hotel, a third in sailor garb, a youth looked like a well-to-do clerk, a fifth was a boot-black, and had his box with him, while a sixth carried a roll of papers as a newsboy.

And so they went on through the various walks of life that youths are engaged in.

The one spoken of as "the Queen" possessed a handsome, youthful form, but what her face might be was not revealed, for she was masked.

She wore a slouch hat, underneath which was visible a wealth of waving hair, but the mask revealed every feature of her face, and had gained for her the name of the "Masked Mascot of the Boy Police League," those who formed this secret band of young ferrets referring to her as "our Mascot," "our Queen," "our Good Luck Genius," etc.

"Lads, I will call the meeting to order, and you can make your reports to me, while we are waiting the coming of our captain, for he will have something important to say to you when he arrives," said the "Queen," and she rapped on the table with a small mallet, and as the band took their seats in silence, said:

"The council of the Boy Police League is now open for business."

"Have you any report to make, Keno?" and she addressed the youth at the right of the line.

"Rising, he answered:

"I wish to report, Queen, that I'm on the track of some counterfeiters, but can make no reliable statement yet."

"And you, Chub?" and having written down in a book what Keno had said, the young Queen turned to the next in the line.

Chub rose and made his report, which was in effect that he had seen two men kidnap a child, a little girl, in the Park, take her in a carriage and drive away.

He had followed, jumped on behind and the carriage had driven out in the country to a farm-house on the East river, and slipping off from his perch he had seen it go up to the house, and soon after return, when walking along the highway he had asked them for a ride and they had given him a lift, so he had seen their faces well, and took note of where they stopped in the city, so was waiting to see something in the papers about the missing child.

"You have done well, Chub; but, here comes the captain," and as the Masked Queen spoke the door opened and in stepped the captain of the Secret Ferrets.

A long slicker was thrown off and it revealed the youth who had so bravely gone the night before to the rescue of a drowning man.

CHAPTER III.

NEW YORK NAT'S ALLIES.

THE arrival of New York Nat was greeted with a salute from all, and he returned it with a cheer:

"Glad to see you, boys."

Then he walked over and took the other seat at the table by the Masked Mascot, and said:

"Are the reports in, Queen?"

"Only two of them."

"Well, we will get rid of them first, for there may be something of importance."

"The two who reported, Keno and Chub, have both made important reports, Nat," and they were read.

"You will look over the papers, Queen, for some notice of the kidnapped child, for it will be there beyond doubt, and you, Keno, stop all else and devote yourself to those counterfeiters."

"I'm willing, cap'n; but it seems hard that the police are after us same as though we was all crooks, and we has to dodge 'em all ther time," said Keno.

"Yes, I wish we didn't have to hide ourselves, for we could do better work at ferretting," another remarked.

"See here, boys, and understand our position once for all," somewhat sternly said the young captain.

"You all well know that our band was formed that we might give up the lives that some of us lived and turn over a new leaf.

"We had lived in a way that made us all acquainted thoroughly with the crooks of New York and their crooked ways.

"We banded together to earn some claim upon the authorities to acknowledge our good work and to make a living for ourselves by getting rewards.

"Our Secret League has prospered, and, in spite of our being shadowed by the police we have time and again rendered most valuable services, and have stored up for ourselves a very handsome sum of money in rewards.

"You know we would be laughed at if we revealed ourselves and asked to be given positions on the regular Secret Service force.

"We would not be trusted, but regarded as a lot of wild, crazy boys, driven into our secret work from a desire to be known as detectives.

"Now, the chief of Secret Service himself has no suspicion of who it is that gives him the valuable information I have been able to send in through your good work.

"He is trying his best to find out who his unknown secret ally is, but in vain; but he recognizes that we have caught crooks for him, that we have hunted down criminals, have prevented crimes being committed by the information I secretly send him.

"When we have made a name for ourselves that he is compelled to acknowledge, when we have heaped up thousands of dollars to our account in his hands, have shown that we are not a crazy lot of romantic boys, but earnest workers, silent as clams, untiring and true on a scent as bloodhounds, he will not be able to set our claim aside, and my word for it that New York will yet have our band of Secret Boy Police in its service as well as men and women.

"Be patient, avoid the real police, do not get into any trouble, come to our weekly meetings here, where no one else dare come, and all will yet come right, mark my words."

A murmur of gratified assent ran through the crowd of youths, at this manly statement of their young captain at their position, hunted, yet themselves shadowers of crooks, and New York Nat, dismissing the subject called out:

"Now, Shorty, your report?"

"None to make, Cap."

"Slim!"

"I'm in the same boat with Shorty this week, cap'n."

"Blow!"

"I'll have a report for next week."

And so the young chief went through the roll call:

"Teaser!"

"Flip!"

"Fatty!"

"Parson!"

"Freckles!"

"Doc"

The last one named had a report to make.

"I'm on to a graveyard robbing by medical students, captain, and I'll notify you to-morrow when I know the time set for the body-snatchers to go to work."

"All right, Doc," and Queen had written down what each had to say, and the captain continued:

"Now, boys, I have a report to make, and I think you will find that I have done well."

All was at once deepest attention to hear the captain's report, which they felt must be of considerable importance as they had been called together that night for a special meeting, called from their various posts of duty in all parts of the city, and no "special" was ordered unless there was something to communicate and decide upon beyond the average, and what that was they were now to learn.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLOT TO KILL.

"Boys, I've got a strange story to tell you," said New York Nat, and seeing that the band was all attention, he continued:

"I was coming to my den here to go to bed, and pretty tired I was, when I happened to overhear the remarks of two men who passed me, while I was waiting for a car.

"One said that a man, who, it seems, they had never expected to hear of again, had suddenly turned up, and the other remarked that he must be turned down.

"You are right; he is at home; so come with me and the thing must be done or we are ruined."

"That was all I heard.

"The two men had evidently just met, and they walked off rapidly together.

"I decided to follow, did so, saw them enter a fine residence, and I took up my stand opposite, for the window-shades on the parlor floor were not closed.

"I saw the men enter the room, for there was a bright light there, and the only light visible in the house.

"A man arose from a lounge and met them, and a quarrel followed, judging from their actions, for I could not hear what was said.

"The streets were deserted, not a policeman was to be seen, and the men did not seem to know that the blinds were not closed or curtains drawn.

"I saw the two men take hold of the one that had been in the house, there was a struggle, then they released him, and it seemed that they became friendly, for one went to the rear of the house and returned with a champagne bottle and glasses.

"They drank together and stood talking, when one reeled and fell.

"It was the man who had been in the house when the others entered it.

"I saw the two then talk hurriedly together, the blind was suddenly drawn and one man came out of the house in haste, went to a cab-stand, got into a cab and returned to the house.

"I followed him, got a cab, shadowed the other vehicle and saw the two men come out of the house almost dragging the other between them.

"They entered and drove rapidly away, stopping at the Wall Street Ferry.

"I had followed, heard one of the men tell the cabman that it was a bad case of drink, and when left alone with the man they had to hold up, they went to the end of a pier near.

"I knew they meant to do away with him, so I slipped into the water, swam under the pier, heard their words, and overboard he came, while they ran away.

"Well, you know I am a water-dog, so I caught the drowning man, swam to another pier with him, called to a crew of a ship that was about moving out and the man was saved.

"I told them he was drunk, had fallen off the pier and I would take him home, so a carriage was called and off we started.

"The ducking had revived the man and he soon came to, so I told him just what I had heard and seen, and that I had wished the men to believe that he was dead.

"Then I heard his story.

"His father had married a second time, a widow with one son the being the son by his first wife.

"The widow and her son had influenced the father against his own child and got him into a scrape that caused him to be sent from home.

"The father died a year ago, but before dying had learned that his own son was not guilty, and made his will in his favor, except the third his wife could claim, and orders were given to look for the exiled young man.

"In case he did not return the widow was to get all, and her son and a friend of his plotted so that nothing was done to find the missing heir.

"The widow died, and as the lawyer was bribed, the whole property went to the step-son.

"It was this step-son and his friend that I had seen.

"The real son had returned that very afternoon, been well received by his step-father, who then went out to look up his friend.

"The result was that they told him he had no right there, a quarrel followed, they then laughed it off and made offers of friendship over a bottle of wine.

"The wine was drugged, the heir soon felt its effects and, in a stupor, unable to help himself, he was taken to the dock and thrown into the river.

"The two murderers, for such they meant to be, returned to their home and they now believe that the heir is at the bottom of the river.

"But, I saved him and took him to the cottage where Queen lives. Mrs. Herbert took the best of care of him, and he is all right now.

"I told him that I, and my comrades, were a secret league to run down crooks and prevent crime, and that the secret must not be known, save that he should go to the chief of the Secret Service, report what had happened, and that he owed his life to the one who always gave warnings and reports under the name of 'The Unknown Ally.'

"He is to go to-morrow, and will not betray who and what we are, while he says that he has returned in comfortable circumstances, and that he will give to the Boy Police League five thousand dollars, in token of his gratitude, and this he will place in my hands to-morrow, so you see our treasury is full and we are in great luck.

"That is the story I wished to tell you, boys," and the chief smiled as though he felt that he had done a good deed.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXILED HEIR.

THE chief of the Secret Service Bureau of the great City of New York, sat alone in the private office of his Headquarters, the morning after the meeting of the Secret League of the Boy Police in the Haunted House, when a card came in to him upon which was written:

"THE UNKNOWN ALLY."

He sprang to his feet in a manner not usual to him, for seldom was it that he al-

lowed anything to disturb the even tenor of his ways.

He was a man in authority, a man of force, will and pluck and showed it in every feature of his face.

The card, however, startled him, and he said to the attendant:

"Show him in in just five minutes."

The attendant departed and, pacing up and down, the chief mused:

"At last this mystery is to be solved, this mystery of the Unknown Ally."

"In vain have I tried to fathom it, my best detectives could get no clue, and now of his own free will the Unknown Ferret, who has so nobly, yet secretly served me, comes at last to tear off his mask."

"Well, I have much to thank him for indeed, and there is a large bank account here in his favor."

"I have a great desire to see this most mysterious Unknown."

So saying the chief assumed his natural air of calm and dropped into his seat, just as the attendant opened the door and admitted a visitor.

The chief's eyes took in his visitor at a glance.

He saw a man of twenty-five, well formed, with a handsome face and well dressed.

He had the unmistakable air of a gentleman, and bowing courteously, took the seat to which the chief motioned him.

"Well, sir, I am glad indeed to meet you at last, though I have not the honor of knowing my Unknown Ally's name?" said the chief.

"My name, sir, is Walter Vanderlip, and permit me to say that I am *not* your Unknown Ally."

In spite of himself a look of disappointment swept over the face of the chief.

"Your card, sir, bore the name."

"Pardon me; it bore the words 'Unknown Ally' but no name."

"Why, may I ask, did you send in such a card?"

"At the request of your Unknown Ally. In fact, he wrote it himself, and believed that it would give me immediate audience with you."

"It certainly would, sir, for I owe much to this person who thus signs himself."

"You know him, then?"

"I do, sir."

"And have come to make known his identity to me?"

"On the contrary, sir, I am pledged to conceal his identity."

"Ah! you then must be the Unknown!"

"Again, sir, you are wrong, for I only arrived in your city four days ago; but I came here to tell you, chief, of a plot against me, discovered by the Unknown, and to whom I owe my life."

"Indeed?"

"My name, sir, is as I said, Walter Vanderlip. Years ago, when I was seventeen, I left my home under a cloud. A considerable sum of money was taken from my father's desk. I was leading a fast life for a boy, and I was accused."

"In fact, all circumstances pointed to my guilt, and my father exiled me from my home, giving me a thousand dollars to start life with."

"I refused the money, for I had a few hundreds of my own, went West, and in a hold-up of a stage-coach by road-agents in Nebraska, I was reckless enough to resist, killed the chief, the other passengers rallied and we beat them off."

"A gentleman in the coach took a fancy to me for my pluck and asked me where I was going."

"I told him the truth, how I had left home, and that I was going to seek my fortune."

"He at once made known to me that he owned a large ranch, wanted some one who could keep his books for him and help him

in various ways, and took me into his employ at forty dollars a month."

"It seems I had saved him from being robbed of a very large sum of money, by my resistance of the outlaw robbers."

"I remained with my good friend until his death, over a year ago, for he came East for his health, and when he died he left me his heir, for he was unmarried."

"I learned, also, that he had called upon my father, had told him my story of the robbery of his home, and believing that I was innocent my father forgave me and left his will in my favor."

"This much I learned through the papers of my benefactor, and I concluded that I would return home."

"I arrived, as I said, several days ago, went to the house and found there my step-brother in full control."

"He had been the one to rob my father, and he told me that he was the heir, but went out to find, as he said, his lawyer to explain all."

"He lived alone in the large house, excepting the servants, and when he returned he brought his friend with him, and I was told by both that I was not the heir."

"A quarrel followed and they attacked me; but finding me their master, they laughed it off, and I was willing to take a glass of wine with them, as they said they were only deceiving me for sport."

"That wine was drugged."

Then followed the story of the attempted murder by the two men, and the belief that they had been successful, with the rescue by the Unknown Ally of the Secret Service Chief, all of which was most attentively listened to by the officer, who had not uttered a word while his visitor was talking.

CHAPTER VI.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

WHEN the young man had told the whole story of the attempt on his life, its discovery by the chief's Unknown Ally, and his rescue by the same mysterious personage, the officer sat in silent meditation for full a minute and then suddenly asked:

"Who did you say your rescuer was?"

"I did not say, sir."

"But you know him?"

"Only as my rescuer."

"You do not care to give me any particulars regarding him?"

"I am pledged not to do so, sir."

"Nor to describe him to me?"

"I cannot."

"Why does he maintain such a mysterious secrecy in his movements, Mr. Vanderlip?"

"He has reasons, sir, which he did not make known to me."

"Well, I shall not quarrel with you, as you are under a pledge of secrecy, nor will I cavil at his actions, for he has been most useful to me in many ways, only it is annoying to be in the dark as I am, regarding one who is serving me so well."

"Yes, and others, for what do I not owe to him," earnestly said Walter Vanderlip.

"Your life, sir, and that means everything."

"But now to this step-brother of yours?"

"Yes, sir."

"He believes you dead?"

"Oh, yes."

"Write his name and address here?"

The Arizonian took the pad and pencil and did as requested.

"Now the name of his accomplice, the lawyer."

This was also given.

"What is your desire in the matter, Mr. Vanderlip?"

"Chief, I would like to have you accompany me at night to his home, having both of the men there together, and I remain in the background while you visit them upon some pretended business."

"Then I will enter and you will see the effect upon them."

"And then?"

"Your men can clap the irons upon them, and I can quickly bring them to terms, and get that which is my own."

"That means, in case they give up you do not care to prosecute them?"

"I do not, sir, for I loved my step-mother as though she were my own, and so long as my step-brother acknowledges his crime against me, that sent me away from my home under a cloud, I am willing to let him off, on condition that he and his accomplice leave New York forever."

"This is generous in you, sir, but it should not be done, for they are guilty of an attempt to murder you, and should suffer."

"I prefer to have it my way, sir, and so came to see you and personally make the explanation, so that it would not go before the courts, as the fact that my father left me his heir, will exonerate me, and I will have my step-brother's confession of guilt to reveal to any one who may doubt."

"You know best, Mr. Vanderlip, and as you came to me in confidence I can but yield, though those two men should go to prison."

"The way they have begun, sir, may yet send them there on another charge."

"I hope so; but I will go with you tonight, and I will take a couple of officers along in case of trouble."

The arrangement being made Walter Vanderlip left the chief, to meet him that night at a certain up-town hotel.

The ring of the chief at the door was answered by a servant who told him that the master was very busy with his lawyer, and must be excused from seeing any one.

"See here, my man, look at this badge and it will tell you who I am, and I wish you to just wait in the hall here with my friends when you direct me where to find your master."

The servant was frightened half out of his wits, gave the information as to where to find his master, and remained in the hall a prisoner with the two detectives, while Walter Vanderlip slowly followed the chief.

Opening the door the chief stepped in with the remark:

"Ah, Mr. Martin, your man said I would find you here, and I have come on a very important errand, for I see that you and your lawyer friend recognize me."

The two men were seated at a table looking over a lot of papers, and they both turned pale when they recognized the chief of the Secret Service.

Without waiting for a reply, the chief continued:

"I learn that a body has been found, whom a hackman recognized as a gentleman who was very much intoxicated the other night, and whom you kindly drove down to the Wall Street Ferry."

"Can you tell me who he was?"

The two men breathed more freely, and Martin replied:

"Ah, yes, but the gentleman we took there was not drowned, so there is some mistake."

"He lives in Brooklyn, and I saw him today, did we not, Jennings?"

"Yes, we saw him to-day."

"Can this be possible, for the body was really identified as the man you aided, and foul play was suspected?"

"Nonsense, he is all right, sir, and I will have him call upon you to-morrow."

"I have brought him to call on you tonight, gentlemen—*bring in the body.*"

At the call of the chief, Walter Vanderlip entered the room and both men started up with a cry of horror, livid in face and trembling with fear.

"Carter, put the bracelets on those men."

The detective named came in and quickly did as ordered.

"Now, Carter, wait outside," and as the detective disappeared the chief continued:

"Now, Mr. Martin, you and your lawyer sit right there and hear what Mr. Vanderlip has to say."

The men sunk into their chairs, while Walter Vanderlip said:

"What I have to say is that I wish a written confession from you, Martin, that you, and not I, robbed my father; that you are willing now, for the sum of five thousand dollars, to leave New York forever, taking with you that man, your accomplice, and resign to me my own."

"Refusing, you both go to jail and your trial will end in a long imprisonment as you know."

"I give you just one hour to get out."

"What do you say?"

The generous terms of the wronged man were accepted without an instant's delay, and the midnight Express to Chicago carried the two plotters whose villainy had been unearthed by New York Nat, the captain of the Boys' Secret Police League.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW YORK NAT'S ALLY.

LEFT in full possession of his home, Walter Vanderlip at once took measures to make himself comfortable and look into the business affairs of his estate which his step-brother had mismanaged.

Proven the legitimate heir he had no difficulty in getting full control, and he was about to go back to the Widow Herbert's cottage and meet New York Nat, telling him how well all had panned out, when he was accosted on the street by a pretty flower girl with the words:

"You will buy from me, sir?"

He would have passed on, but he saw in the face one he knew, and said quickly:

"Why, Miss Olive!"

"You in the disguise of a 'flower girl?' and he glanced at her short dress and pretty attire in surprise, for when seen at the Widow Herbert's cottage she had worn long dresses, and had the appearance of a young lady, while now she scarcely looked fourteen."

"Yes Mr. Vanderlip, and I am here to see you," she said, hastily.

"What can I do for you, Miss Olive, for I was just starting out to the cottage."

"That is just it, for the chief is moving heaven and earth to track Nat, and he has you shadowed now, knowing as he does that you know him."

"Nat saw your plotters leave last night, and he saw that a man was shadowing you—there is your shadower now on the corner, the one dressed like a dude—and I came to ask you not to come to the cottage, but let Nat visit you at your address, either a hotel or your house."

"He is wise beyond his years, as you are also, Miss Olive."

"Certainly, I will do as he wishes, so tell him to come to-morrow, for I shall advertise in the morning for servants."

"These are the prettiest," he added, taking up three of the bouquets which he had been looking carefully over, and handing Queen the money for them, just as the detective passed.

In an instant the flower girl darted for the detective in his dandified dress.

"Say, mister, you want a button-hole, I know."

"No, I do not."

"Why, you are only half dressed without a button-hole bouquet."

"I don't want any," and the shadower was hastening on after Walter Vanderlip.

But Queen was not to be shaken off so easily, and called out:

"No well regulated dude should be without one—come, I'll give you one, for I don't like to see a dude without a bouquet."

"I'll hand you to the police, girl, if you bother me."

"That is just what I would expect a dude to do, call the police to protect them from a little girl—tra-la-la, Charlie," and Queen bounded away, leaving the shadower to hasten on after Walter Vanderlip, who was walking rapidly, as though anxious to throw the man off his track, for he was convinced that the girl knew what she had told him to be a fact.

"What a beautiful girl she is," he muttered as he went along.

"A child, and yet a woman."

"And she is an adept at a disguise, too."

"There is some deep mystery hanging over that young girl and her brother which I cannot fathom."

"Well, I owe them more than I can ever repay," and Walter Vanderlip sprung upon a Broadway car, got off on the other side and entered a *coupe* standing at a stand near by.

He thought he had thrown the shadower off his track, but he hadn't, for the detective took another cab and followed him.

But that night he had only to report that Walter Vanderlip had gone to the *Herald* office and put an advertisement in the paper, then to his lawyer's office, next to a tailor's, and afterward to a furniture store, when he ended up with dinner at the Hoffman and then home.

The shadower had been foiled in tracing him to any one who might appear to be the chief's Unknown Ally.

The next morning, in answer to the *Herald's* ad., a stream of "help" began to arrive at Walter Vanderlip's house, cooks, butlers and house-servants.

The woman in charge admitted them, and a cook, butler, who was willing to serve as *valet* also, and a house-servant were quickly engaged, but still the stream kept coming, and the one in attendance at the door had only to repeat over wearily:

"Places all filled—too late!"

"Will yez take that kiard to the master?" said a handsome-faced young Irish girl.

"It will do not a bit of good, for he's supplied, I tell you."

"That same may be the case, but I'm after askin' yez to take me kiard in to him," and the request was emphasized by handing over half a dollar with the card.

This had the desired effect, for that servant carried in the card, and glancing at it Walter Vanderlip read:

"MISS BRIDGET O'TOOLE,

"Herbert Cottage."

"Ah! he cannot come, so has sent the servant, I suppose," muttered Walter Vanderlip, and he said:

"Show her in."

A moment after Miss Bridget O'Toole entered, and looking up, Walter Vanderlip said:

"You are from the Herbert Cottage?"

"Yis, sur."

"From my friend, Mr. Nat Norton?"

"No, sur, I'm after bein' New York Nat meself," was the answer, and the pretended "Miss O'Toole" gazed smilingly at the young man, who cried excitedly:

"By Jove, but you are New York Nat in reality."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WARNING.

"Sh! Mr. Vanderlip, don't speak my name too loud even here, for I am Miss Bridget O'Toole," said Nat with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

"You are certainly a very fine looking girl, Nat, and you fooled me completely."

"I can't take any chances of discovery, sir, and my sister rigged me out as you see me."

"She is an artist, yet had good material for a model."

"I am glad she stopped me from going to the cottage yesterday, for I was shadowed as I afterward discovered, though just why I cannot tell."

"To track me, sir, for I have mystified the chief so that he is determined to ferret me out, and I am equally as determined that he shall not know me until I get good and ready for him to do so."

"You certainly assumed a disguise to throw him off the scent, for I have had a couple of hundred visitors to day, all looking for places: cooks, butlers, and house-girls."

"Are you suited, sir?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Let me warn you that it is a trick here for burglars and sneak thieves to answer advertisements also, to get the lay of a house and prepare for their work of devilry."

"Ah! I am glad to know this, for I will be on my guard, and then I will be prepared, for having lived in Arizona a number of years I know what it is to protect one's life."

"I would call a messenger, sir, or go yourself to the parties those people gave as references, so that you can see that they are all right."

"I will go myself, for I have no desire to harbor an assassin or a thief in my house."

"But I have your money for you, the five thousand dollars I promised you, and when you need more you know where to find me, Nat."

"Thank you, sir."

"But I have a favor to ask of you, sir."

"Granted before known, Nat."

"You are most kind, sir."

"Out with it."

"You know enough about me, sir, to understand my reason for keeping unknown to the Chief of the Secret Service, and how determined I am that he shall not find me out?"

"Yes, Nat."

"I have told you, sir, that I am the captain of a band of Boy Police, as we call ourselves, or Secret League."

"Yes."

"Now I find it hard at times to always communicate with the chief as I would wish, for it is dangerous to our league, from the danger of being tracked, and you have seen him, and he knows that you are aware of who his Unknown Ferret is."

"I told him I was pledged not to tell."

"I knew that I could trust you, sir, and I will yet place more confidence in you; but, what I now wish to ask is that you will be our ally."

"Your ally?"

"Yes, sir, that is as far as being our go-between."

"I think I understand you, Nat: that you wish to make your communications to the chief through me?"

"That is just it, sir."

"I am more than willing, in fact will be glad to serve you."

"I thought that you would consent, sir, and told Queen so, or rather Olive, for the League call her Queen, sir."

"You will have to be careful in visiting me, as the same person seen coming often will be shadowed, I fear, for I know how anxious the chief is to find you out."

"The same person will not call twice, sir, at least near together, for one day you will receive a letter by mail, again by Express, then by messenger, and through odd visitors at various times."

"All right, you know how to work it, Nat, and I'll leave it to you, and act promptly whenever I hear from you, so count me as your Arizona Ally, Nat."

"I thank you, sir, and for this most generous present of money, too, which I shall at once turn over to Queen, our treasurer."

"It would be a smart thief that could rob her, sir, for she is onto them and all their ways."

"Now, Mr. Vanderlip, as you do not wish to hire Miss O'Toole, she will take her departure, but don't forget the warning I gave you about the references, especially the butler, for he may be a sneak thief, perhaps worse."

"I'll go at once, Nat, and thank you," and Walter Vanderlip laughed as Nat made a courtesy and left the room.

Ten minutes after he sprung into a carriage and drove up to the fashionable house given as a reference by the butler.

The family were in Europe and the man in charge said they had been away for a year.

Asked about the butler, he remembered a man answering his description who had once served the family for a week and then disappeared with jewelry and silver plate.

Going to a telephone office Walter Vanderlip called up the chief and asked to have two detectives, acquainted with crooks sent to his house at four o'clock.

Then he went to the references of the other servants and found them all right.

At four the detectives were there, and they were taken out and shown the new butler.

The recognition was mutual and the man attempted to escape but was captured and ironed.

"He is a wicked fellow, sir, and would kill to rob; we have been on the watch for him for a year," said one of the detectives, and they took the butler away, while Walter Vanderlip muttered:

"Again saved by that brave boy."

CHAPTER IX.

TO CATCH THE BODY-SNATCHERS.

HAVING gained in Walter Vanderlip a strong ally, and been able to do him another service in the warning against the butler, New York Nat turned his attention to the three reports of his Boy Police demanding attention.

The first in order of action came that of Doc, who had reported an intended "body-snatching" affair to be held in a cemetery above the city some distance.

Looking over Doc's report, as he sat in his dismal quarters in the old Haunted Mansion, Nat noted the hour set, and the supposed number there would be in the raid on the dead.

He saw too that the intention was to rob the grave of a young girl who had just died, and Doc's report indicated that the ghouls would be medical students.

But Queen had been reading over the papers, as was her wont, and posted by the name of the dead girl, she had discovered that she was the only child of rich parents, and that her disease had simply been an ordinary one.

This set New York Nat's mind to cogitating and he mused aloud as he sat there as follows:

"Doc's medical student tale don't go.

"It's a clear case of rob to sell the body back again, to my way of thinking.

"I guess I'll take the band with me and camp out there to catch these body-snatchers ourselves.

"Let me see, I'll send Queen out to get the locality of the grave, and I'll then go and look around for position and an entering place.

"Yes, that goes," and he at once left his quarters, slipped out of the walled-in grounds of the mansion and made his way to the Herbert Cottage.

There he saw Queen and sent her off on her errand, while he made a round among his Boy Police, visiting the hotels, messenger office and other points where he knew where to find them.

Visiting four of the band, he left them to notify the others, that the League would meet after dark at the Haunted Mansion, and

then he went on out to the cemetery to find Queen.

She saw him coming and they met out of the cemetery gates, and she at once said:

"I have been to the grave, Nat, and it is literally covered with beautiful flowers.

"Only the blackest-hearted men could disturb that poor girl after death."

"There are men who will do anything for money, Queen."

"Well, I hope none of those who rob that grave will escape you.

"But here are all the particulars for you to find it, without making inquiry as I had to do."

"I will take in the situation, Queen, and come to the cottage for supper with you," and New York Nat passed on into the cemetery.

So explicit had been Queen's directions that he had no difficulty in finding the grave.

It was situated not far from the high wall that guarded the cemetery and in a newly improved plot.

Just beyond the wall was a grove of trees, and houses were few and far between at that point.

Nat took his bearings well, noted the points of vantage and disadvantage for a night ambush, and then, watching his chance scaled the wall and dropped over outside.

There was a road running near, but it looked as though it was seldom traveled, and certainly would not be at night.

There was no house within several hundred yards, and a valley led down toward the railroad that ran five-hundred feet away.

Having taken in the situation perfectly, and noted how he could reach the spot from a highway, he walked back in that direction, reached a little station near the cemetery gate and was soon back in the city and at the Herbert Cottage.

As Mrs. Herbert owed the lives of her two children to Nat, he having saved them from drowning, she had been more than happy to take his sister as a boarder in her house, when he had asked it of her, and Queen found her like a dear mother to her, while the youth always received a warm welcome in the cottage.

He was now welcomed to supper, and disappointed them when he said that he must leave right early, as he had a most important engagement on hand.

That engagement was to meet the boys at the Haunted House, and he was on time to the minute.

Each one of the boys was armed with a stout stick, several of them carrying dark lanterns and Doc, Parson and Keno Nat allowed to carry a revolver, well knowing that they could be trusted in their use, for they were cool-headed fellows and would fire no shots at random.

When the Boy Police had all assembled Nat told them that the rendezvous would be at the timber outside of the cemetery wall, and directed them just how to get there.

They were to go by twos and threes, so as not to attract attention, and accompanied by Keno and Doc he set off for the point of rendezvous, going up to take a train and be first on the spot.

CHAPTER X.

THE GHOULS OF THE GRAVE.

NEW YORK NAT and his two companions were first on the field, and leaving Keno to wait for the others, he and Doc went up toward the cemetery wall for the latter was to lead one of the parties of Ghoul-catchers.

Returning to the place where they were to meet the others they had not very long to wait before all had arrived, Chub remarking:

"I don't like this graveyard business a little bit, Cap'n Nat."

"You can remain here or go back if you wish, Chub."

"You bet I don't—I goes with the gang,

for I hain't one to back down, only I don't like spooky work."

"I hope we will do good by it anyhow.

"Are all ready?"

All answered that they were and Nat led the way up the hill to the other edge of the timber near the wall of the cemetery.

As they reached the old road referred to he stopped suddenly and all crouched down in the gloom of the timber.

The leader heard the sound of a voice.

It was soon repeated and they distinctly heard the words:

"Keep still, won't yer?"

"I doesn't wonder yer is scared at bein' here, for I is too; but then it's oats fer you, and wittles for me, for ther money is big we gits."

The speaker was a negro beyond all doubt.

He was not fifty feet away from the crouching Boy Police, and indistinctly could be seen a horse and wagon standing in the old road close up against the cemetery wall.

"Boys, the Ghouls are already at their work.

"Doc!" whispered Nat.

"Yes, captain."

"Take three boys with you, and scale the wall above here, going to where the Ghouls are at work, and waiting for my signal and then you know what to do."

"Yes."

"Remember none of our faces must be seen, and no blow is to be struck if it can be helped.

"All right, captain," and Doc and his men crept away as silent as ghosts.

"Keno."

"Yes, cap'n."

"You remain here with three of the boys, and when you hear my signal from within the cemetery, for the grave is not two hundred feet from the wall, just catch that darkie and his horse."

"All right, we'll catch him."

"And you come with me," and designating those he wished to accompany him, New York Nat slipped away back through the timber, made a flank movement to a point some distance below the waiting wagon, and there scaled the wall into the cemetery.

He led the way around until he knew the grave lay between him and the wall, and then spreading his men out, he began to slowly advance.

He knew that Doc and his men were in position, and that all was ready for the advance.

As noiselessly as spooks the line advanced in a semicircle, gliding in and out among the tombs and graves, until a dark group loomed up ahead.

It was the Ghouls at work."

They talked in low tones, and two of them were working hard with shovels throwing out the fresh earth, and they had reached the box, for one said:

"Now we have it."

They had no idea that a living being, other than the negro outside of the wall, was within a quarter of a mile of them, until suddenly in their ears came the words:

"And we have you!"

"Hands up, for you are surrounded!"

At the same time a shrill whistle was heard and eight dark forms suddenly glided around the Grave Ghouls.

The two in the grave ducked down, as though fearing shots, but the one who was not at work, had recovered quickly and attempted a show of resistance.

In an instant Nat had leaped to his side and thrust a revolver in his face, while he cried:

"Don't be a fool, for your darkie and his wagon are ours, and we are a dozen against you."

"We was only robbin' ther grave for ther medical college," growled the man.

Nat did not reply until he had a pair of handcuffs on the man and then he said:

"Don't lie, for I know what your game was."

"Come out of that hole, unless you wish to stay in with a bullet in your breast."

Thus urged the two men scrambled out with ludicrous haste, and ironing the two others Nat led the way to the wall.

There were two ladders against it, so the coffin could be lifted up in a level position, and ascending one of these Nat gave a whistle.

"All right, Cap, we has the nigger and the mule," said Keno.

"And he's scared that white we can see him in the dark," said another.

"Silence!"

"Let no one speak without orders."

"Keno, take these men over and put them in the wagon."

A short ladder was on the other side of the wall, so that the prisoners were made to go over, and then they were blindfolded and placed in the wagon.

The Boy Police followed, leaving the ladders on the inside of the wall where they had been found.

"Now, sir, drive to where you intended to take that body, if you value your life," said Nat to the negro.

CHAPTER XI.

A FORCED CONFESSION.

"BETTER gag the prisoners, cap'n," whispered Keno.

"Yes," as they might give an alarm, should there be others in the scheme," and a halt was ordered while the three prisoners were then securely gagged, and their hands bound to a rope about their waists.

The negro was terribly scared, his teeth chattered as though he had a chill, for he had mistaken Keno and his men at first for ghosts, and then when caught, saw the gallows staring him in the face, for he feared he would be hanged.

In response to New York Nat's order, he said with chattering jaws:

"Yas, sah, boss, I does jist what yer tells me."

He then started up his wagon, the three prisoners stretched out in it, while Nat, with Doc, Parson, Keno and Chub followed, the others having been told to make their way back, so as not to attract attention by a large crowd.

The negro turned into the highway, followed it for a short distance, then left it by a road that led down to the river.

Halting on the bank he said:

"I was to fetch it here, sah, and if anything scared them gents away while comin', I was jist to whistle three times, and a boat would come ashore for de remnants, sah—dat's de truf 'fore de Lord, 'tis boss."

Nat gave three whistles, and immediately from a small sloop lying at anchor off-shore, but with her mainsail up, came a boat.

"Be ready three of you to jump in with me, when we catch him, and go off to the sloop, for there may be more to rope in there."

"Chub, you remain and guard the prisoners."

The boat reached the shore as Nat ceased speaking, and the man who was rowing found a revolver shoved against his head and heard the stern command:

"Surrender or you die!"

He held his hands above his head in an instant, and they were seized and ironed.

"Who else is on board that sloop?" asked Nat.

"No one," was the gruff reply.

"We will see," and the Boy Police Captain rowed out with two of his comrades to find out.

The man had told the truth, there was no one on board.

Returning to the shore Nat asked the

negro where he lived, and being told, he said:

"Chub, you drive this man's wagon to his home and leave it there, and that ends the night's work for you."

"We will run the sloop down to the city and deliver over these prisoners."

Having whispered this to Chub, who at once drove away, Nat ordered the four white men and the negro into the boat, and with his comrades rowed off to the sloop.

The white men were at once locked in the little cabin, the negro being kept on deck, and then the Boy Police got up the anchor, the jib was set and the craft put away down the river before a fair breeze, Nat at the helm.

"Now, my man, what do you know about those body-snatchers?" asked Nat of the negro.

"Next to nuffin', boss!" was the answer, and the darkie was terribly frightened, it could be seen, at the masked faces of his captors and the scrape he had got himself in.

"Tell me what you do know!"

"Waal, sah, dey comes to me, or two of 'em did, and axes me ter hire out my mule and wagon fer a leetle night work."

"I agreed, as they said the price would be big, and so I holds myself ready for der comin'."

"It were to-night they come, and when I seen what ther work was I struck."

"For higher wages, I suppose?"

"Jes' so, boss, and dey agreed ter give me fifty dollars."

"A good price, surely."

"And what did you hear them say?"

"Waal, sah, dey was talkin' among demselves, and said as how dey would git big money for a body, as de old folks would pay to git it back whatever price dey sot on it."

"That tells the whole story, my man," and soon after Nat ran the sloop in to an anchorage, rounded to, let fall the anchor, lowered sail and then led the negro into the cabin.

The men were more securely ironed then and left alone, the negro having been also gagged, and the four Boy Police got into the boat and rowed ashore.

It was nearly dawn now, and the four ferrets parted, Nat going at once to the home of Walter Vanderlip, where he was admitted after a second ringing of the bell, by the Arizona Ally himself.

"Why Nat, what brings you here at this hour?"

"Anything gone wrong?" asked Walter Vanderlip.

"You must pardon me, sir, for calling you up at this hour, only it is most important, but I will try and not do so again."

"Never mind, if I can help you I don't care at what hour you come."

"I have no time to explain, sir, but call up your man and send him with a note to the chief's house; here is his address, sir, and I have written here what you are to tell him to do."

"Just say that after the prisoners are secured, and some one sent to notify the keeper of the cemetery, you will call later and give full particulars, for you shall know all by ten o'clock, sir," and with no other explanation then, New York Nat left the house and started homeward.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MASCOT TELLS THE STORY.

QUEEN had been so anxious regarding the raid of the Boy Police upon the Graveyard Ghouls, that she had not slept well, and she was up bright and early the next morning, for Nat told her he would come to breakfast.

The sun was just rising when she saw him coming, and she met him at the gate, and said anxiously:

"Well, Nat?"

"We did it."

"Caught the men?"

"Yes, more than we expected, four white men, a negro, a sloop, a mule and a wagon."

"And the body?"

"We caught them before they got it out of the grave."

"I am so glad; the fiends deserve the severest punishment."

"They will get it, never fear."

"But, Queen, I tell you what I wish you to do."

"Yes, Nat?"

"I'll tell you the whole story, and then do you rig out in clothes that will make you pass for a nurse, or a lady's maid, and go down to Mr. Vanderlip's house."

"Yes."

"Then tell him the whole racket as you get it from me."

"I will."

"And ask him then to go and make it known to the chief."

"I called there and told him enough to have the chief send after the prisoners, on board the sloop, before, by any chance they could get away, and also to have word sent out to the cemetery keeper, so that he would know the raid was known."

"Mr. Vanderlip can tell the chief the whole affair, except not to give our gang away of course."

"Which he won't do."

"Oh, no, he's O. K. and true as steel; but now hurry up breakfast for I'm as hungry as a bear, and then skip out for Vanderlip's, while I crawl in my roost and get some sleep, and come back this evening to see you, and then you know there is another game to play."

"Yes, to find that kidnapped girl Chub reported?"

"That is it, and the boys are to meet to-morrow night and talk it over, for I will know by shadowing the place to-morrow just what to do."

Breakfast was soon ready, and Nat's appetite carried out his words that he was as hungry as a bear.

When he had finished he slipped away and going up to his quarters in the old Haunted House was soon fast asleep.

In the mean time Queen had rigged out as Nat had requested, in a simple dress, and looked like a pretty nurse girl going on an errand.

She took the car down to the home of Walter Vanderlip, and a new butler, just arrived that morning, admitted her, and carried her name to the master.

He came into the parlor, saw that the butler and no other servant was about, and greeting her pleasantly led the way into his library, while he said:

"You came from Nat, Miss Olive?"

"Yes, sir."

"I sent the chief a letter, as he asked, and received response that he would at once attend to the matter."

"Then I returned to bed to finish my interrupted sleep and have only just had breakfast."

"Now what have you to tell me, Miss Olive?"

"As fiendish a piece of work, sir, as was ever perpetrated," said Queen, as I will always call her in speaking of her as the fair Mascot of the Boy Police League.

"I have no doubt of it, and also that Nat has once more rendered valuable service."

"He has, sir, as you will know," and Queen then told the whole story as she had gotten it from the lips of New York Nat.

Walter Vanderlip listened with the deepest attention to the strange, gruesome story of the raid of the Graveyard Ghouls, and when he had heard all said earnestly:

"How happy will those parents not be when they know all, and what will they not owe to your brave brother and his band of young ferrets."

"This was not a money consideration, Mr. Vanderlip."

"I can understand that, Miss Olive—"

"Call me Queen, for I am one of the boys, you know, or rather their mascot, for Nat told you," said Queen.

"All right, Queen it is; but, as I was saying that, as those parents would have been terribly pained at the theft of their daughter's body, and would have paid any sum asked to have gotten it restored to them, they will gladly give a reward for the saving of it; but I will go at once to the chief and place all the particulars before him, and he will understand just what to do."

"Will you await my return here?"

"Oh, no, I must at once return home, and you know Nat's work in the matter is done, so there will be no report to make to him."

"Did he tell you that I was now to be the go-between between the Boy Police and the chief?"

"He did not put it that way, Mr. Vanderlip; but said you were kind enough to be our ally, and I was so glad to hear it, for you are the very one to help us when we need you," and Queen took her departure, the butler muttering as he let her out of the door:

"The master is in no need of nurse girls, I take it, not after being a man of family."

Ten minutes after Queen left, Walter Vanderlip departed on his errand to see the chief of the Secret Service.

CHAPTER XIII.

WALTER VANDERLIP HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.

"Well, Mr. Vanderlip, I congratulate you upon having escaped perhaps death at the hands of that pretended butler you engaged—at any rate, robbery."

So said the Secret Service chief to Walter Vanderlip as he entered his office at noon of the day following the capture of the Graveyard Ghouls.

The chief referred, however, to the escape of the young Arizonian from the intended attempt of the butler to secure a place in which he could rob his employer.

In answer, the Arizona ranchman said:

"I was fortunate, sir, for that man, it seems, was a perfect devil."

"Indeed he was, for my men recognized him as one of the worst crooks in the city, and a desperate fellow in gaining his ends, for human life was nothing to him when he could escape by taking it, or gain gold through murder."

"But how came you to suspect him?"

"I did not do so."

"You were warned by some one?"

"Yes, by your Unknown Ally, for he gave me the information that in employing a servant I might be entertaining a devil unawares, to slightly change the quotation."

"So my Unknown Ferret posted you, did he?"

"He did, sir."

"He told me that crooks often took advantage of advertisements for servants to report and look over a field for robbery."

"He is right, they do."

"He advised that I see the references given, and the result was the capture of that alleged butler by your men."

"And the reward which was offered for him, for you know there was one of a thousand dollars, and it goes to you."

"Keep half of it, sir, for your Unknown Ferret, for he really was the captor, and divide the balance between the two detectives you sent me."

"You are generous, Mr. Vanderlip, and I will do as you say."

"But you have no desire to yet inform me as to the identity of this Unknown Shadower?"

"A desire, yes, but no intention of doing so, chief, until released from my pledge; but I am here in regard to the arrests you made this morning."

"Yes, I found the men, four whites and one black, on board a sloop as you reported, anchored off Forty-third street."

"They were in irons and packed in the cabin of the sloop."

"I interviewed them an hour ago, separately, and they tell different stories, the negro implying that they were, the white men, robbing the grave to hold the body for gold, they stating they were ordered to do so by students of a medical college."

"Which latter is the truth?"

"I suspected it, but do you know it?"

"I do, for I have the full particulars of the affair from your Unknown Ferret."

"Ah, again the Secret Shadower who knows so well how to thwart criminals and catch crooks."

"Yes, sir, for it was he, and those he has aiding him—"

"Who are they?" quickly asked the chief.

"I cannot tell you, for I am ignorant of just who he employs to aid him."

"But he learned of the plot in some way, to rob the grave of Miss Sturdevale, and it was to get from her parents a rich reward for the return of the body."

"To do this they secured a sloop, intending to use her as a trading craft of some kind, to avoid suspicion, keeping the coffin concealed in the hold, until arrangements could be made for selling it back to Mr. Sturdevale."

"The price demanded would be a very large one, for the dead girl was an only child and her parents are reported millionaires, so that it would have been given gladly by the afflicted father."

"Beyond doubt."

"It was a bold scheme, cleverly arranged, yet fell through by the act of this mysterious Unknown Shadower of crime."

"It did, sir, and it was successfully prevented without any idea of money being taken into consideration."

"I can believe that, and yet Mr. Sturdevale will doubtless be glad to pay a liberal sum for the prevention of the robbery."

"He should do so, sir, and if so, retain the amount with other sums you hold to the order of the Unknown."

"I am not authorized to tell you this, for as I said that money has not been thought of in the matter, yet still it should be."

"By all means; but these prisoners told me that their captors were a dozen in number and all masked."

"I am also told so, sir."

"I made no comment, allowing them to believe that they were my men, masked for a purpose."

"It seems that they were, and the purpose was well served."

"They caught each man engaged in the heinous crime, though the negro is not as guilty as the others."

"They cleverly got hold of the sloop and the man on board of it also, and it reveals the partition made between the cabin and the freight hold, all ready to put up when the coffin had been placed there, and which would have looked like the regular cabin wall."

"They miscarried, and that is what I was to tell you, so that you could jot down another mark in favor of your Unknown Informer."

"I shall do so, and gladly, Mr. Vanderlip, and though he has now reported to me through you, I confess I am still as much in the dark as ever as to who I am to thank."

"And must await his time to discover, sir, for I can tell you no more."

"I am not so sure of that, Mr. Vanderlip, for I have hopes of making the discovery myself, for it annoys me not to be able to fathom the mystery."

"You will not find out through shadowing me, chief, as you have been doing," said Walter Vanderlip with a smile.

"Ah! you suspect that you are?"

"I know it."

"How so?"

"Well, the Unknown warned me that you had me shadowed, and I watched and found my shadow; but it is no use."

"When I have news for you I will bring it, and any communication you have to make to the Unknown, I will see that it is delivered, but I am interested now in keeping his secret and will," and Mr. Vanderlip left the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRACKING THE KIDNAPPERS.

In her duty of searching the papers each day, for New York Nat had all the dailies, morning and evening, delivered at the Herbert Cottage, for Queen was wont to cut out items that were of a nature to interest her in the Boy Police League's secret work, and paste them in scrap books, with dates and comments.

After Chub had reported the kidnapping of a little girl in Central Park by two men, who had driven away with her in a carriage, the following day Queen had discovered a reward offered for any information that would lead to the recovery of the lost child.

Said child, the paper stated, had left her home, near Central Park, to spend the morning playing with some friends, and she had not been since heard of.

It was feared that she might have been run over and taken to an hospital, have gotten lost, or perhaps stolen.

That was about all the first advertisement stated, but a later one did not escape the Queen's keen eyes, and it read:

"\$1000 REWARD."

"The above sum will be paid to any one giving information leading to the restoration to her friends of a young girl who has been missing since the tenth of this month."

"She is nine years of age, is known by the name of Eloise Archer, is well grown for her years, has golden hair, blue eyes and is very pretty."

"At the time of her leaving home she had on a blue woolen dress, slouch hat with plume and a gold ring with a small diamond in it."

"Any information will be thankfully received, and the reward paid if it leads to her being found, by Ingersoll Lockwood, Attorney at Law, Stewart Building, Chambers Street, New York."

This advertisement was pasted away and shown to New York Nat, who at once said:

"That is Chub's girl, Queen, and we'll find her."

"If she has not been taken away from where he saw them have her."

"If so we will find her," was the confident reply of the young King of Shadows, as Nat's boy comrades had nicknamed him.

Nat set out on his track of the missing girl by hiring a horse and a light spring wagon, buying a lot of chickens, eggs and butter, putting them in it and starting for the country.

His horse was not of the best, and he drove hard purposely, so that by the time he had made a flank movement and come around so as to approach the place where Chub had seen the men go with the girl, the animal was broken down.

"That's the place, Nat," said Chub, as the house came in sight, and into the gate they turned.

Driving up to the house, Nat was met by a woman whom he asked if he could hire a horse to go on with, as his animal was unable to do so.

He was told that the boss was absent and the one horse in the stable she could not allow to go.

Then Nat asked if they could get dinner and feed their horse, when they would leave their wagon there and go on after another

animal, for all of which he offered to pay liberally.

The woman answered in the affirmative, and an hour after the two youths started off on foot, leaving the horse and wagon in the woman's care until they returned for it.

"Well, Chub, what did you find out?"

"The girl is there."

"Sure."

"I heard the woman talking to her, for I heard her whisper to her that if she called out she would beat her black and blue."

"Yes, and I saw her."

"Where?"

"At the window of the second story, and she was trying to raise it to speak to me, when I saw the woman come out of the house to go to the well, and the girl dodged back."

"Well, what's to be done, Cap'n Nat?"

"Why, we will come with the gang at night and get her."

"It will raise a row."

"No, for I will come with a fresh horse at night, you following with the boys."

"Yes."

"The man will go with me to the stable to get my horse, and then you can slip in with the boys, and we'll hold him up and get into the house and hold the fort."

"I see; but the kidnappers won't be in it."

"Yes, for you know their address and one of the boys can pretend to be a messenger from their accomplice out here, and send word for them to come out at once, as trouble is feared, and the chief can have some of his men there to bag them."

"But where is the proof against them, Nat?"

"The girl."

"Cap'n, you are a dandy from Wayback, yes the King Shadower of 'em all," and Chub stopped in the road, removed his hat and made a low bow.

"Stop your nonsense, Chub, and tell me if we are not in it?"

"With both feet, up to the neck, over head and ears—you bet we are," was Chub's enthusiastic reply, and going to the nearest railway station the two young ferrets were soon back in the city.

When Nat saw Queen that night she had another advertisement to show him, and which read:

"FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

INGERSOLL LOCKWOOD, *Att'y*,

Stewart Building, New York City.

"Will pay for information leading to discovery of Eloise Archer, a girl of nine, blond hair, blue eyes, pretty, and well reared.

"She disappeared from her home on the 10th inst. under circumstances that lead to the suspicion of foul play, for she stands in the way of one who seeks a fortune that will come to him if she is not discovered within a certain time.

"Remember the reward!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE SHADOWERS AT WORK.

"We get the boodle offered there, Queen," said Nat cheerily, when he had read the increased reward offered for the kidnapped girl.

"I hope so; but do you go to-night?"

"Yes, and we'll make no mistake I'm thinking."

"Will you bring her back with you?"

"No, that would not be wise."

"Why?"

"She is young, and might be prevailed upon to talk, you know."

"How will you arrange about her then?"

Nat was silent a moment and then said:

"I'll bring her into town, put her in a carriage and send her to Mr. Vanderlip, and he will take her to Lawyer Lockwood's office, or to the chief, and have him come

there after her, for they will naturally wish to know all she can tell about those kidnappers."

"Nat."

"Yes, Queen."

"You said the girl saw you?"

"Yes, from the window."

"Now if she sees you again, she will know you, and can tell the chief that it was a youth who rescued her."

"Whew! you are right."

"What shall I do?"

"Go disguised to the place, and let the boys all be masked as usual, while Doc, who is the oldest, or Parson, can escort her to the city."

"By Jove, but what a head you have, Queen," and Nat decided to act upon her advice.

It was just an hour after that Nat, most faithfully disguised as a country lad, with a reddish wig and even freckles artificially stained upon his face, entered a house on Bleeker street and asked for the room of two men who put up there, saying that he had forgotten their names, but knew them by sight.

He was directed to a room on the top floor where two men lived, and he knocked at the door, heard shuffling feet within, low voices and then a man appeared.

He had the stamp of villain upon his face, there was no mistaking that, and asked gruffly:

"Well, what do you want, Hayseed?"

"Mr. Weinberg sent me to you, said he didn't want to write, but I could tell yer."

"Are you his son?"

"No, I'm his farm help."

"Well, what is it?"

"He said as how you was to come out to the place to-night, not before twelve, though, and take the baggage you left there away with you, for he had to move next day for reasons you would understand."

"Do you hear that, Jake?" asked the man, of one in the room.

"I hears, and there is something up, so tell him we'll be thar on time."

The man at the door repeated this to the youth and asked:

"Do you know if anything has gone wrong?"

"No, I don't know nothin'."

"Don't be a fool and question the country jay, but say we'll be there," called out the other angrily.

"All right, but don't come, he says, afore twelve o'clock to night."

"All right."

"He said you'd give me a dollar to go to the museums and see the monkeys and the fat woman, and—"

"Here is your money, but get back in time to tell him," and the door was closed in Nat's face.

But down to the keyhole went his ear quick as a flash, and he heard the words:

"Something is wrong, and we've got to look up another hiding-place for the girl."

Nat hurried away then and returned to his lonesome quarters, and was on hand to meet his pards as the they assembled ready for the night's work.

Nat had formed all of his plans, and it was made known to the boys, and then they dispersed, to meet again as soon as possible at a point near the place where the kidnappers had taken their victim.

They were to go in three separate vehicles, already engaged for the trip, Doc going in a buggy with Parson, and Nat on horseback.

They met very promptly at the rendezvous, and having hidden their vehicles in the woods, leaving two of the boys with them, Nat led the way on horseback to the house, the others following on foot.

Leaving Chub, who knew the situation of the house and barn, to place the boys in position, Nat rode up to the house and called out:

"Hello!"

The dogs barked furiously, but there were too many for them to attack them, and the man appearing at the door supposed that the brutes were after Nat who said:

"I'm sorry to trouble you, sir, but I came after my wagon and broken-down horse."

"Yes, my wife tole me about him already," answered the man with a German accent.

"I wish to pay you, sir, and get him."

"Dat vas all right; but I wants a dollar for having to come out to-night."

"It's a big price, but I'll pay you—here it is."

"Now come and keep those dogs from eating me up when I get off my horse."

The dogs still barked furiously, and taking the money Nat offered, the man said:

"I gets me my hat and coat," and he closed the door.

But a moment after he came out with a lantern and led the way to the barn.

As he entered it Nat slipped down from the horse and thrusting a revolver in the man's face he said sternly:

"Make an outcry and you are a dead man!"

At the same minute the man beheld half a dozen forms crowd around him with faces masked and arms raised as though to strike him.

He was terribly scared and could only mutter a cry for mercy, when irons were slipped upon his wrists and a gag forced into his mouth.

Then two of the lads were left to harness up the horse left there, and which was now rested, and one placed in guard of the prisoner, while Nat, Chub and the others went to the house.

The door was open and the woman was seen at some work in the kitchen.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CLEAN SWEEP.

NEW YORK NAT had masked his face, so he would not be recognized, and stepping into the kitchen he startled the woman by his presence, and she gave a cry of alarm as she beheld half a dozen forms behind him.

"I am sorry, madam, for your sake, but you have a kidnapped girl concealed in your house, and we have come for her."

"Oh, Lord! I feared that it would be found out, but my husband would not listen to me, he wanted the money so," she groaned.

"Call the girl here."

"She is locked in."

"Give me the key."

The woman took a key from her pocket and handed it over in silence.

"Which is the room?"

"The one over this up-stairs; but she is asleep."

"I shall not frighten her," and Nat went up-stairs, knocked at the door and called out:

"Don't be frightened, little girl, for we are your friends, police officers, come to take you away."

There was a sound of running feet within, then the words:

"Oh, I'm so happy! I'll be ready in a minute."

In little more than that time, Nat having unlocked the door, she opened it, and he said:

"Don't be frightened because we are masked, for, being detectives, we do not wish to be seen by these wicked people."

The girl half drew back in dread, and said:

"You are not afraid for me to see your face, for I do not know who to trust, and will not go unless I see you and know if I can believe you?"

"You will not tell any one, no matter who may ask you, if I show you my face?"

"Not a soul."
"Nor tell whether I am young or old, or anything?"

"No, but I must see who I am to trust."
"How can you tell?"
"I will know when I see your face," was the simple answer.

"Then look, Eloise."
"You know my name?"
"Yes, you are Eloise Archer."
"Yes, and now—" and she gazed fixedly into the face revealed to her by the removing of the mask, viewing it by the lamp which Nat held in his hand so as to throw the light full upon his features.

She gazed steadily for half a minute, and said:

"You are not bad—I can trust you."
"Then come with me, and wrap up well. The man and the woman are both prisoners, and—"

"She has been kind to me, and Mr. Weinberg has also; but it was those two horrid men whom I hate—the two who brought me here—and they told me such lies."

"I will have them safe in a couple of hours more; but now, come with us, and you shall be taken home to-morrow."

"I have no home, for I am an orphan, and live with a cousin who is paid to care for me, for some day I'll be rich."

"I hope so," and Nat led the girl downstairs, where at sight of her, the woman broke out crying, and said:

"Don't tell them, child, that I treated you bad, for I didn't mean to, though it was wrong to keep you here, I know."

"No, you were kind to me, and I'll kiss you good-by, though you did threaten once to beat me."

"I am going away, and I won't feel sorry if I never see you again. Good-by," and the girl did kiss the woman, feeling sorry to see her in tears.

"Chub," whispered Nat, "you take her with you in our provision wagon, and lead my riding horse behind!"

"Go to where the vehicles are and wait for us there, for we will remain to catch the kidnappers."

"All right, boss."
Then Nat told the young girl to go with Chub, and he and the others would wait to capture her two kidnappers, who were already on their way there.

"I must see his face."
"All right, but you are not to tell, for it's a secret you may some day know."

Calling Chub, Nat raised his mask, and Eloise took a good look, and laughingly said: "He's too fat and good-natured to be a bad boy."

"Remember, you are not to say that he is a boy."

"I will do as you tell me; but what is your name?"

"Call me Nat."
So Chub went out with the girl and Nat, got into the wagon left there, with the broken-down horse again hitched to it, and drove off in the darkness, Nat's riding horse in lead behind.

The rest of the boys then were placed in position by Nat, who had the prisoner Weinberg brought into the house, where, though with regret, he said to the woman:

"If you help us, Mrs. Weinberg, it will be better for you."

"I'll do all I can."

"Those kidnappers are coming here soon, and when they arrive tell them to come in."

"They will kill me."

"No, they will not be able to do so, I'll promise you."

"All right."

"If you fail us, then bloodshed will follow, for those men shall not escape, and what you do to aid us is in your favor."

"I'll help you and be glad to, for I want to get out of this scrape."

"My husband was tempted by the offer of

big money, for he is grasping in his way, though he owns this place, and is making good money trucking; but I suppose now it's all up with us."

"I expect he will be punished, but your helping me will be in your favor, and you can hire help and run the place until he gets out."

"Gets out of what?"
"Jail," was the significant remark, and the woman groaned.

It was just midnight when the keen ears of the young detectives caught the sound of wheels coming down the lane, and soon after a buggy drew up before the house and a man called out:

"Hello."

"Come in both of you, hitch your horse," said the woman appearing at the door, and one man sprung out of the buggy and walked toward the house, the other going to fasten the horse, for Nat had had the woman shut the dogs up in the barn.

As he crossed the threshold the man was enveloped in a blanket, tripped up ironed and gagged in an instant, and as his companion entered five minutes after he shared the same fate.

The three prisoners were then manacled more securely, and with regret Nat was forced to put the bracelets upon the woman and secure her so that she could render no aid to the men.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Weinberg, but I can only leave one man outside to guard the place, and I want no monkey business, and you'll be set free when day comes," said Nat.

But the "one man" was not left, as suggested, for Nat went off with his Boy Police, back to the place where the others were waiting with the rescued girl and the vehicles, and all were soon on their way back to the city. Eloise in the buggy with the young captain of ferrets, whose night's work had been such a clean sweep of the crooks into the net set to catch them.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REPORTS OF THE YOUNG FERRET CHIEF.

As he had unmasked to the young girl, Nat saw no reason why he should place her under the charge of Doc to take to Walter Vanderlip's.

He did not care to go himself, as he was sure the place would be shadowed by the chief, and he did not care to put himself in a way to be known and have his steps dogged.

That he could trust Eloise, young as she was, he felt assured, and yet it would be taking a great risk which he cared not to chance.

So he said to her as they neared the city, just as day was drawing near:

"Eloise, I am going to take you to a hotel and get you a room, so you can go to sleep until your lawyer comes after you."

"Yes, you know best, Nat," she said frankly.

"You know your lawyer?"

"Yes, Mr. Lockwood who comes up to see me once a month and pays my board, and for my schooling and clothes."

"Well, I will send him to you."

"And where will you go?"

"To my home."

"Won't I see you again?"

"I hope so."

"My cousin lives on West Fifty-eighth street, near the Park in the Overlook Flats, and her name is Mrs. Mark Denton, but I don't like her much, or Mr. Denton either."

"All right, I'll see you some time," was the answer, and soon after Nat stopped the buggy near an up-town hotel, went in with Eloise and told the clerk she had just come in from the country to meet friends, and to give her a room until they came for her, and then he registered her name on the book as,

"MISS ELOISE ATKINS,"

purposely writing it wrong, as he knew her real one was well-known.

Telling her to have nothing to say to any one, until her lawyer came he bade her good-night and drove the buggy back to the stable where he had hired it, after which he went to his quarters in the old Haunted House and tired though he was wrote out a full statement of the affair to the Secret Service Chief, addressing it to Walter Vanderlip, and stating that he would send Lawyer Lockwood to call upon him at an early hour, when he could tell him where to find his little client, Eloise Archer.

In the letter to Mr. Vanderlip Nat also stated that the prisoners would be found in the house of Weinberg, and he directed them how to find it, and get there with greater speed by catching a train.

Walter Vanderlip had told him that he was generally an early riser, being always up by seven, so with an apology for again disturbing his rest, Nat decided to go send Flip at once with it, for several of the boys had gone to the old mansion to get a few hours' rest before going down-town.

Flip worked in a messenger-boys' office, so had his uniform on, and when roused by Nat at once started upon his errand to leave the letter at the home of Walter Vanderlip, while Teaser, who was a bell-boy in a hotel, carried a note to Lawyer Lockwood, whose house address Nat had looked up in the Directory.

Walter Vanderlip was dressing when the messenger-boy was ushered up to his room, and at a glance at the address he recognized who it was from, and said:

"Where did you get this?"

"A gent left it at the office, sir, with word that there was no answer, but I thought I'd better be certain," said Flip.

"Here is your money."

"Charges paid, sir."

"Take it," and Flip turned away, while Walter Vanderlip called out:

"Hold! I may need you."

Flip hesitated and Walter Vanderlip, not suspecting that the boy was one of Nat's band, hastily read the letter, and then said:

"Here, take this to the home of the chief of the Secret Service; it is not far from here," and he took out a card and wrote a request that the chief would call upon him before going to his office as time was important.

"If he has gone to his office take it there, and here is a dollar for you."

Flip departed on the jump, delighted at the fees he had received, and saying to himself:

"He's a reg'lar gent from Gentville and no mistake."

He delivered the message in person to the chief, who was just going to breakfast, and then went on his way to the office where he was employed, serving simply to pick up what news he could for the information of the band of Boy Police.

Just as Walter Vanderlip came down from his room, the butler announced a visitor, and glancing at the card he saw that it was that of the lawyer, Mr. Lockwood.

Entering the library Walter Vanderlip saw rise to meet him a gentleman who towered considerably over six feet in height, possessed a handsome face, with dark earnest eyes, a dark mustache and imperial and waving masses of snow-white hair, certainly a most striking looking personage.

In a courtly way he introduced himself, and then said:

"I am directed, Mr. Vanderlip, by a mysterious note I received before I had risen this morning, to apply to you for information of the whereabouts of a little client of mine, a young girl who lately disappeared from her home."

"I have also received a communication just now, Mr. Lockwood, that enables me to

give you the information; but have you breakfasted?"

"I confess I did not delay for breakfast, sir."

"Then breakfast with me and we will talk the matter over," politely said Walter Vanderlip.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAWYER'S STORY.

THE attorney of the kidnapped girl impressed Walter Vanderlip most favorably, and he said:

"The truth is, Mr. Lockwood, a great service was rendered me a short while since by one who acts most mysteriously, and gleans information in a way that is unfathomable.

"For reasons best known to said party, he prefers to communicate with the authorities through me, and this morning he has written me a letter which I will read to you in part, and then you will understand fully the situation.

"I have written to the Chief of the Secret Service, whom I claim as a friend, to come here before going to his Headquarters, and expect him to do so.

"Now to this story of your little client, Eloise Archer," and Walter Vanderlip read New York Nat's letter of the discovery of the kidnapping, the tracking of the carriage to the truck farmer's home, and the plot to rescue the girl, which had been successfully carried out.

The information was also given that the two kidnappers had been lured into the trap set for them, and were then in irons at the truck-farmer's home, along with the man and his wife who were also prisoners, while Eloise Archer was then in Room 47 of an up-town hotel the name of which was given, yet was registered as Eloise Atkins, on account of her own name being so well known through her having been stolen.

Ingersoll Lockwood listened with the deepest attention to the letter, but before he could make any comment the chief was announced and the three left the breakfast room for the library.

The chief and Lawyer Lockwood were known to each other, and at the request of the latter Walter Vanderlip again read the letter he had received, closely concealing the identity of the writer.

"Well, Mr. Lockwood, I congratulate you upon finding your little client, though not through my agency, yet through one whose ways are most mysterious and who has rendered me services of a most important nature.

"I will at once telephone, with your permission, Mr. Vanderlip, for a police ambulance and three of my men to send after those prisoners, and meanwhile Mr. Lockwood might go after his client," and, as there was a telephone in the house the chief called up the Harlem Headquarters and gave the necessary orders, telling just where they would find the prisoners out in the country and to go with all speed.

"Let me make known the story of this child, gentlemen, before I go after her, as she is doubtless fast asleep after the exciting night she has had of it," said Ingersoll Lockwood, and he continued, as both the chief and Walter Vanderlip seemed anxious to hear the story:

"The girl is an orphan, and her parents left little property, as it then was estimated, but enough to educate and care for her it was supposed, until she was of age, when she would have to earn her own living.

"Her family is an old one, was once very rich, but the father of little Eloise owed a cousin of his a few thousand dollars, which he was also to get out of the little estate he left, or, on condition that he would care for the child through life, would leave him the property in full, and to be the heir in case of her death.

"I was named in the will as one of the girl's guardians, and for the child's sake, for she came here to live with a distant relative, with whom she boarded so that she could attend school, I looked most closely into the matter.

"The property left was in Kansas City, and the town was on a boom, so I discovered that the cousin named, and who was executor, had decided to take the property, setting aside a certain sum for the girl's living.

"I at once determined to thwart this scheme, which, looking fair on the surface, was a fraud, as the property, worth at the death of her parents say seven thousand dollars, had more than quintupled in value.

"The sum set aside for her by the executor was just eight thousand dollars; but finding that the property was rising rapidly in value, I returned the amount to the executor two years ago, and now offered him the sum owed him with interest to date.

"He refused it, and now the property is worth at public sale even, over a hundred thousand dollars.

"Failing to get control as he wished, I believe the man has sought to gain the property as the heir in case of the child's death, and I place her disappearance as his work, and shall see that he is now forced to take his pay, and thus cancel his debt, which, by the terms of the will, will no longer leave him the heir in case of her death.

"Such is the story, gentlemen, and your mysterious ferret and rescuer of little Eloise, Mr. Vanderlip, has done a most valuable service as you see.

"Now will you accompany me to see the little girl, and then I must look up a boarding-school for her, as I will no longer trust her with those kinsfolk, who may, or may not be in league with the man who has certainly tried to get rid of her to inherit her fortune.

"The reward, Mr. Vanderlip, I will be glad to pay into your hands, as I have the money in my keeping which her kinsman refused in payment of his debt.

"By a talk with these kidnappers we will gain a clue to force that man to terms, and cause the court to oust him from his position if he refuses to resign it," and interested in the story of Ingersoll Lockwood about his fair client, the chief and Walter Vanderlip accompanied him to the hotel where New York Nat had left her.

CHAPTER XIX.

FORCED TO TERMS.

LITTLE Eloise Archer was found at her breakfast when her three visitors arrived, and she had ordered it up to her room, not caring to go to the table without being better dressed.

She received her attorney with a glad cry, and his friends were greeted in her sweet way, for she was a little lady.

Then Lawyer Lockwood sought to draw from Eloise the story of her kidnapping, and what had followed.

She told all in a frank way, how the men had told her that Lawyer Lockwood had sent them to bring her to him, and she had gone without suspicion, they saying he was going to have her visit in the country.

Once at the house of the truck farmer, and she had soon discovered that she had been deceived, and she was told she was to be kept in hiding for fear her uncle might steal her away.

Weinberg and his wife had made her a prisoner, and the woman though not kind was not unkind to her.

"Now about your rescue, Eloise?" asked Mr. Lockwood.

"Yes, sir."

"Who rescued you and how was it done?"

Eloise thought for a moment and then said:

"My rescuers came to the house, captured Mr. Weinberg and his wife, then waited and caught my kidnappers."

"Then what?"

"They put them in irons and left them there and brought me to the hotel."

"At what time?"

"About three o'clock in the night, sir."

"Who were they?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"You do not know, you mean?"

"Well, sir, they were detectives, I guess."

"Can you tell us no more about them?"

"I will not do so, sir, for they did not wish to be known, and I would not tell what they were not willing to have me," was the firm response.

"Whether they were young or old, men or women, or anything about them?" asked Mr. Lockwood with a smile.

"Nothing, sir; I will say no more," was the determined reply.

Walter Vanderlip laughed, Lawyer Lockwood looked surprised and the chief was without doubt very much annoyed, and said:

"You know it is for your good, and the good of the law-abiding people of the city we wish to know, Eloise, so tell me who your rescuers are."

"The men who took me away, the man and his wife who took me a prisoner are all in irons, so why wish to know who my good friends are, for they didn't ask for money, and treated me so kindly?"

Further argument and entreaty failed to move the girl's determination and Walter Vanderlip said:

"You have learned your lesson well, little lady, and I congratulate you upon the way you recite it."

"I say, Vanderlip, you are certainly in league with my Unknown Ferret, and now here is another ally for him, or her, as the case may be; but I have nothing to complain of, as long as they work in my interest as they do, in fact as all of you do," said the chief.

"Well, whoever it was that befriended Miss Eloise, chief, she seems inclined not to give the fact away," Mr. Vanderlip replied, while Ingersoll Lockwood remarked:

"Nor should she, if it is a matter of confidence and she is doing no wrong in concealing the fact."

Eloise smiled at the remark of her lawyer, in whom she had most implicit faith, and then said:

"Am I to go back to the home of my cousin?"

"Do you wish to do so?"

"No, sir, I do not," was the prompt reply.

"Well, Eloise, you can go home with me, and you can soon be fitted up and go to boarding-school, while I will see to this cousin of yours, who seems anxious to get possession of your property," and soon after the little heiress found herself comfortably situated in the lawyer's home.

Then Mr. Lockwood with Walter Vanderlip went down to the chief's quarters to interview the prisoners.

They were all there, having been brought in by the officers, and one by one they told their stories.

As the woman was not, or seemed not to be implicated as was her husband, she was allowed to go under a bond, which Lawyer Lockwood arranged for her and Walter Vanderlip went security for, at the request of Eloise, and take charge of her place.

Her husband was guilty of the knowledge that the child had been kidnapped, so went to jail, while the two kidnappers lost heart at the position they found themselves in, and knew not what to say or do.

In the midst of the conversation a mes-

senger arrived with a package for Mr. Vanderlip, and departed before he could be detained.

That package was from "The Unknown" and there was a letter inclosing papers.

The letter stated that a search of the kidnappers' rooms revealed letters that might cast some light upon their act, and they were read and turned over to Lawyer Lockwood, who said:

"This is a clear case against that man, and unless he turns over full authority for me to act, I shall send him to prison, for I start to Kansas City to-night.

"Your Unknown Ferret is a wonder, chief, and leaves nothing undone to aid us."

The kidnappers and Weinberg were sent to jail and that night Lawyer Lockwood started for Kansas City.

He was gone just ten days and returned with full powers to act for Eloise Archer as her guardian and executor, for the guilty cousin had yielded all claims and surrendered her fortune.

CHAPTER XX.

A MURDER MYSTERY TO UNEARTH.

TRUE as steel the little Eloise could not be induced to betray the secret of who her rescuer had been, or to make one compromising statement of who her allies had been.

She was well fitted up in a wardrobe, and upon the return of Lawyer Lockwood had been placed at Madam L——'s fashionable boarding-school.

But before going she had learned from Mr. Lockwood that he had, with the papers in his possession, quickly brought her cousin to terms, and forced him to relinquish all claim as executor and heir, upon the payment of the sum owed him by her father.

The lawyer furthermore stated that the property was now worth about two hundred thousand, and for fear of a drop in the value of real estate in Kansas City, he would soon dispose of it and invest in New York paying property for her.

The kidnappers were not aware of who had been the one to hire them, but this the lawyer had traced through his letters to them, which, though signed by a fictitious name, came from Kansas City, and were in his handwriting.

All that could be done with them was to try them as kidnappers of Eloise for the hope of gain, and send them to prison for the full limit of the law for such a crime, while Weinberg, as an accomplice, would also receive punishment in a lesser degree.

The reward offered by Ingersoll Lockwood was promptly paid over to Walter Vanderlip for New York Nat, who transferred it to the keeping of Queen, while a special council of the Boy Police was called in the old Haunted Mansion and the good news reported to them.

Where they had looked for nothing from that night's work they were rejoiced at the fortune, to them, they had secured, and the King of the Ferrets rose still higher in their estimation; when Queen, as treasurer, reported upon the finances of the League as follows:

"We have received in cash two sums of five-thousand dollars each, with numerous other sums from the members amounting to some four thousand dollars.

"We have paid out for expenses, salaries and other things sixteen-hundred dollars up to date, and have in cash now above all claims, twelve thousand four hundred dollars, which is really about a thousand for each member.

"Besides we have in the keeping of the Secret Service chief, subject to the order of the Unknown Ferrets, all of twenty thousand dollars, with more to hear from.

"You see by this statement that the Boy Police League are flourishing financially, as well as gaining a name for ourselves."

The Boy Police were wild with delight at this statement and regarded themselves as almost millionaires, while they pledged themselves over again to cling to each other with the tenacity of death and devote themselves more than ever to their work of shadowing the crooks.

The reports were then asked for, and Keno's statement regarding the counterfeiters was to be taken up and acted upon, as he had he thought, tracked them to their lair, and New York Nat stated that he would start upon their track in the morning.

Then Blow had a strange case to report.

It was known that a poor woman in the outskirts of town, a widow, had been arrested for the murder of a wealthy bachelor living near her, or rather as an accomplice of the murderer.

A man of the tramp kind had been seen to enter her house one night, and leave it the next morning well dressed in some clothing belonging to her late husband.

She had gone out with him toward the town, and there they had parted, he disappearing, while she had made a number of purchases, paying out in two instances a one hundred dollar bill.

The bachelor living near her had been found murdered in his house, and a blood-stained knife was discovered in the clothes of the tramp left in the woman's house.

She had been lodged in jail to be tried for murder, though the strange man had not been found.

The woman's story was that the man had come to her house and demanded food.

She had given it to him, he killing a chicken himself which he had insisted should be cooked for him.

Afraid of him she knew not what to do, and she had allowed him to remain all night, and at dawn he had demanded clothing of her, and she had given him shoes, hat and a suit belonging to her dead husband.

In return he had given her some money and demanded that she go to town with him and make some purchases for him.

She had done so, and then they had parted.

The money she had spent for herself was her own, she said.

No one had believed her story, but suspected her of having been in league with the tramp, who had murdered the bachelor, robbed him and shared the money with her.

But Blow had a report to make which was in effect that he had a room in a tenement in the Bowery.

It was on the upper floor, and there were many others in the building.

The night before it was raining and he had gone to his room early, and heard two men come into the next room.

He heard the clink of money, got out on the fire-escape and looking into the room heard and saw all that was said and done.

They were counting money out of a tin box which they had just dug up, it having been buried for some time, and on the lid when it was open he had seen the name of the murdered bachelor—

"LUCAS DUNN."

There were papers in the box, some jewelry, gold, silver and paper money, and the men seemed to have made a rich haul.

"One of the men was called both 'Caleb' and 'Dunn,' by his companion, who was addressed by the other as Denny.

There was some trouble about the money being divided, and Denny had said:

"You ought not to touch this, for you'll get it all."

"Yes, and you'll strike me regularly for more, I suppose."

"I won't go broke, Caleb, as long as you have boodle; but we must get the other box and then divide."

"All right, we'll go on Sunday night, for the box of silver, then divide."

Such was the conversation Blow had overheard, and New York Nat said:

"Boys, we'll unearth the mystery."

CHAPTER XXI.

AT BAY, YET MERCILESS IN THEIR GRIP.

THE Boy Police League was at bay, there was no denying that fact.

They had to fight the crook, solve mysteries, prevent crime, and yet it was a constant struggle to hold their own against discovery and betrayal.

They dreaded the police of the city and the detectives, who they knew would suspect them of harm rather than good.

They felt that though they were shadowers, they were shadowed.

They knew how anxious the Secret Service chief was to solve the mystery of his Unknown Ferrets.

They were well aware that he was determined to find out how it was they received their valuable information, and how it was they could elude detection by his very best agents.

Their grip was merciless when fastened upon the crooks.

This he had discovered.

New York Nat was like a phantom detective to him, and yet he was as sure as death, when he and his Boy Ferrets undertook to unearth a mystery.

"We'll stand at bay and fight off discovery."

"We'll do our work, and do it well, showing no mercy."

"In our own good time, when our king of them all sees fit to let the chief know who and what we are, we will take off our masks, and not before, for we can dodge the chief and his detectives as surely as we can catch the crooks."

Such was the decision of the Boy Police, and after the discussion of the affair, they dispersed with more confidence than ever in themselves, and in their young captain and Masked Mascot, for still to them did Queen remain unknown.

The question had come up regarding Keno's "find."

That is, his tracking of counterfeiters.

Keno was as shrewd as could be, a good shadower, but not a planner or plotter, and many of the rest of the band were of the same kind.

They could find out anything, could track down one they wished, but could not originate a plot or execute it.

This was the work of New York Nat, who was good at plotting and planning, and had in the Masked Mascot of the Boy Police League a most valuable assistant.

Whenever he was at a loss for an idea or a plot, Queen came in with a suggestion.

Then, too, Nat had an able adviser in Walter Vanderlip.

The young Arizonian had become thoroughly domesticated in his new home.

He lived luxuriously, yet was not extravagant.

With two fortunes at his command, that of his father and the one left him by the ranchero who had made him his adopted son, he could live as he pleased.

He had made acquaintances, and had joined a club.

He had his cook, house-girl and butler, so lived in comfort.

He was fond of his books, and enjoyed hours in his library.

Then there was the theater to go to when he pleased, and he had a nice pair of trotters and a riding horse for a turn in the Park, and he kept them at a stable.

Walter Vanderlip was not a dissipated or a fast man, yet enjoyed life to its full bent.

He had taken a wonderful interest in New York Nat and Queen, and he was glad to aid them, for he felt they were striving for a good purpose.

He was anxious to pick up as much infor-

mation as he could that would serve Nat, and read the papers thoroughly to see if he could help him.

Between Walter Vanderlip and Lawyer Ingersoll Lockwood a strong friendship had sprung up, and, in fact, the Arizonian had confided in the attorney, and told him his story, and how the chief's Unknown Ferrets had aided him.

"Call on me, Vanderlip, for any question of law, and I'll give it gratis, for I am anxious to aid your Secret Ferret whoever he may be," Ingersoll Lockwood had said.

And he had added:

"He must be some remarkable person indeed, for my little ward Eloise is devoted to him, and constantly asks me if I have heard of her rescuer, and how it is that the great Secret Service chief of New York cannot find him out."

"He is a wonder, yes, and so are those he has connected with him, one and all," had replied Walter Vanderlip.

And so it was that New York Nat and his Boy Police had, outside of their band, and their Mascot Queen, strong allies and friends in Walter Vanderlip, Lawyer Lockwood and Eloise Archer.

With such allies they were sure of success, in spite of their being at bay constantly to avoid detection, and they daily made their secret influence felt with those in authority, while their grip upon the crooks became more and more merciless.

New York Nat enjoyed greatly the mystery he was under, and it was to his interest and pleasure to keep it up.

Queen also was pleased at their success in holding the legitimate police and detective force at bay, making discoveries which they could not, and accomplishing triumphs which were enriching the band.

The fortune which she had cast aside, from the reason that she would not accept the money of Miser Max of the Haunted House, given to her as an atonement for a crime against her parents, she cared nothing for.

She believed that the Boy Police League would enrich her as one of them, and she entered heart and soul into their every work, while she felt that Nat's ambition was to one day make a name for himself.

So matters stood in the Secret League of the Haunted House, when New York Nat decided to act upon the discoveries made by Keno of the gang of counterfeiters.

Acting upon the information of Keno, New York Nat set out to put his merciless grip upon the law-breakers, who were counterfeiting the money of "Uncle Sam."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE YOUNG PEDDLER.

A MILE or more above the cottage of the Widow Herbert, where Queen made her home, and New York Nat was often wont to take his meals, was a pretty little house not far from the Hudson.

It stood slightly apart from the other houses near, had half an acre in grounds, and it was said that there lived there a man and his wife who had once been very rich, but had come down in the world.

They had a horse and cow, and seemed fairly comfortable; but they would have nothing to do with their neighbors and were spoken of as:

"Those stuck-up Massey folks."

Sundays they went to church, and so were not looked upon as bad, from that fact.

They bought all their groceries down-town, and had the butcher and baker call at their door.

At first they were objects of interest to their neighbors, but were soon almost unnoticed, when they returned no neighborly calls and seemed only anxious to live alone, and remain unmolested.

One day Mrs. Massey was seated on the

little piazza of her house, engaged in sewing, when a peddler approached the gate.

She was a woman of handsome appearance, not over thirty, and had a haughty, severe air about her.

"Go away, or I will call the dog," she said as the peddler was about to come in the gate.

"Dogs don't mind me," was the smiling reply, and the peddler entered.

"Go away, I tell you."

"Don't you want to buy somedings?" asked the peddler with a pleasant smile.

He was youthful in looks, had a cheery face and carried a large pack.

"No, I don't want to buy somedings."

"I vas so sorry, for I has my mudder and fader to support and dey vas old peoples."

"That is in your favor if you are telling the truth, but you peddlers are such liars, and the last one I bought from cheated me terribly."

"He vas a very bad man; but I vas honest."

"They all say that."

"Let me show you somedings."

"No, you have nothing that I want."

"Maybe so, maybe not," and he held out a tray of jewelry.

"Brass and glass," said Mrs. Massey with a toss of her nose.

"You vas a goot judge; but I show you gold."

"It's all brass."

"Vell, I show you some laces."

"Cheap."

"I have some fine laces, so look at dot."

"That is real lace," said Mrs. Massey with interest.

"You vas know it already."

"What would you ask for that?"

"You pay big money in t'e town."

"How much?"

"Vell, you would pay three dollars a yard, won't you?"

"Yes, and cheap at that," muttered Mrs. Massey.

"Vell, I gif you dis lace at two dollars a yard."

"How can you sell it at that price?"

"Because I buy it so cheap," and the man took up a shawl and laid it to one side.

The eye of the woman saw it and she said quickly:

"I will take the lace, all that you have in that piece, if you will sell me that shawl cheap."

"It was very fine."

"I know that."

"It was very expensive."

"How much?"

"Vat you gif for dat shawls at Arnold & Constable's?"

The woman looked up the street, saw some neighbors watching and said:

"Come in."

The peddler did so.

She led him into the parlor, raised the blinds and looked at the shawl critically.

"I will give you a hundred dollars for it."

The peddler smiled.

"Well, half a hundred more."

"It was worth three times so much."

"Granted; but you did not pay that for it."

"I pays one hundred and seventy."

"Well, I'll give you two hundred."

"I take him."

"I am surprised to see a peddler with such valuable goods."

"Vell, you see I don't sell 'em in t'e city, but go to t'e country."

"I vas see you, and you look like you vas know goot t'ings, so I ask you."

"How did you get these things, that you can sell them so cheap?"

The peddler looked about him cautiously and then said:

"You vas buy dem?"

"Oh, yes."

"Suppose they vas smuggled?"

"I have nothing to do with that."

"Suppose dey vas stolen?"

"That is your lookout, not mine."

"Vell, I tell you, dey never pay duties maybe, and maybe dey vas stolen."

"You vant some more?"

The woman looked at some other things, purchased half a dozen silk stockings, some fine gloves and two silk patterns, all at half their value.

Then she went to get her money, for she had to pay the peddler for her purchases some four hundred dollars.

As she left the room he sprung to the door between, and placed his eye to the key-hole, then his ear.

Voices were heard within and what was said he caught evidently, for he smiled in a peculiar way.

In a short while the woman returned and in her hand she held a roll of bills, and from this she counted out the sum due the peddler.

"I was so much obliged," he said, and promising to come again he shouldered his pack and took his leave, both the woman and himself apparently pleased that he had come.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BELL-BOY FERRET.

"Boys, we have got them dead to rights."

So said New York Nat to his faithful band of young ferrets, as they met in the Haunted Mansion at night, prepared to to make a move of some kind.

"You went there then, Cap'n Nat?" said Keno eagerly.

"Yes, I played the game of a German peddler, and took the booty with me we found on board the sloop the other night, and which I reserved for just such work as it came in for, as I thought it might some day."

"You saw the men?"

"No, but I saw the woman, and heard the men."

"Then you are sure I was right?"

"Oh, yes, Keno, you had them down fine, and we will bag our game to-night."

The woman's name is Massey, and she is said to have been rich once, and holds herself above her neighbors, with whom she will have nothing to do; but that is for a purpose, for they don't want visitors in that house you bet.

"I sold her about four hundred dollars' worth of goods and I've got the money for them too, which is the best of it."

The band had assembled upon call in the old mansion, and they sat in their "council-chamber" in a semicircle around the table, at which were seated New York Nat and Queen.

The lamp shed its light in the faces of the young ferrets, causing a strange and picturesque scene, with their varied attire and expressions.

It was what many would have said was a gathering of hoodlums, and yet to study the faces of those young detectives, dodging the police themselves, yet rendering most valuable services, hunters yet hunted, it would be seen that there were those among them who would make their way well in the world.

The masked face of the young Queen of the Ferrets was a mystery to all of them save Nat.

Not once had her face been revealed to them, and this one fact added to the strength of the girl with them, and the mystery.

They regarded her as some being above them, and yet she was kindness itself to all.

Having told of his trip to the cottage as a peddler, New York Nat said:

"Now we must go slow in this work, but I wish the whole force of the band to be on hand."

"We will get there after midnight, and we will quietly surround the house."

"I will then knock and tell the woman who I am, Dutch Dick the Peddler, I said was the name they gave me."

"I'll tell her that I have reason to believe that the cops are on my track, and having been seen at her house, they may come there to question her as to what I told her."

"I can thus win her confidence, and once she opens the door, all will be plain sailing, for I'll ask her to take my pack and keep it until the row blows over."

"You boys will be all around the house, and you, Doc, and Parson and Keno, must rig out as police, and be ready to push right in with me."

"There are, I think, three men there, and they'll show fight, I guess; but we will be ready for them and win the game, and my idea is that we'll make a haul worth going after."

"Now, boys, what reports are there to make?"

The Ferrets made their reports, none of which were important that night save one, and that was what Flip had to say, which was as follows:

"You know, Cap'n Nat, the cashier that is held for robbing the safe of Leech & Gorman?"

"Yes, Flip."

"Well, everybody thinks he's guilty, and yet I've got a clue to who is the guilty one."

"Go ahead, Flip, for if we can save a guilty man and catch a sinner, we are only too glad."

"Well, you see, Bolton, that was the cashier's name, invested quite largely in stocks, and lost his money, and it was said he used the firm's cash, and to hide his losses opened the safe one night, making all appear as though it was a burglary."

"Yes, I remember."

"A policeman said he saw Mr. Bolton near the banking-house that night, for he always wears a light slouch hat, long coat and glasses, and the cop swore to its being the cashier."

"But I was sent on an errand the other day from the messenger office, by a young man, and told to wait for an answer, and if the party was not in, to bring the letter back to me."

"I see."

"The man was awfully nervous, and in his flurry he forgot to seal the letter, so I read it."

"You are sure that it was not sealed Flip?"

"You bet I'm sure, for I hain't taking no chances with my liberty."

"It was open and I read it."

"Well, what was it?"

"It was a demand for pay, for his share of a game played on the night of the twenty-seventh, it read, and there was a threat that unless an appointment was made and the thing squared, an innocent man should not suffer for a guilty one's act."

"Ah, Flip, you are getting there."

"You bet I am, and the letter set me to thinking, so I studied the name of the man in it, and the writer."

"The names were 'George Leech' and 'Mark.'"

"Now I remembered that I had seen those names mentioned in the Leech & Gorman robbery, as being clerks there, or rather George Leech and Ben Markham, and so I put things together and it struck me that the game referred to was robbing the safe, and the innocent man was Bolton the cashier, who said that it was his money he used in speculating, some he had made in former speculations."

"I took the letter, saw Mr. Leech, sealing the letter before I gave it to him, and he wrote on the envelope:

"Will see you on Sunday night—will

come to your room at Hotel V—at ten o'clock."

"That is the hotel where you are working, Flip?"

"Yes, that is where the man came and wrote the note, sending me with it; he stops there."

"Was nothing more said?"

"He told me to say to Mr. Markham that he would bring what he asked for, that was all."

"That looks like the boodle was going to be divided."

"That is just what it does look like, Cap'n Nat, and my idea is that if there was some one to break in upon them when they are there, it would show up their game."

"There is a room adjoining Markham's, leading into a bathroom, and that might be engaged a day before and a gimlet hole bored to see through."

"We'll do it, Flip, for I guess you are right about that Leech & Gorman matter, that the law has got the wrong pig by the ear," said Nat, and he added:

"But now for the counterfeiters," and like spooks the Boy Police slipped away from the old mansion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COUNTERFEITERS.

THE little cottage was dark when New York Nat approached it, as though the occupants were absent or had retired.

But the Boy Police slipped around it in their quiet way, and Nat went to the front door, while Parson, Doc and Keno, dressed as public men, for they had thrown off their outer coats upon arriving, stood in the shadows close at hand.

Nat rung the bell and almost instantly there was a voice from the window above that asked:

"Who is there?"

It was the voice of Mrs. Massey, and Nat replied in broken English:

"It vas me, Dutch Dick t'e Peddlers."

"What do you want?"

"I wants to told you somedings."

"Come to-morrow."

"Maybe it vas too late dot time."

"I want to give you my pack to keep, for I vas in troubles."

There was a silence of a minute and then came the words:

"Wait, I will come down and talk to you."

The door opened a few inches, after bolts had been shot back and a bar removed, and the woman asked:

"Well, what is it, for I don't like your coming here at night to get me into trouble."

"Maybe it was more trouble if I didn't come, for t'e cops was after me and I want to leave my pack here with you for some time."

"Where is it?"

"Right here," and Nat dragged a heavy India rubber-covered pack into sight.

"You are sure no one saw you come here?"

"No one saw me; but a friend told me t'e cops was after me, and I can get away if I don't have t'e packs."

"Well, I will keep it for you, only I want no trouble, and if they catch you you must not tell where it is."

"I von't tell nottings."

"Well, bring it in, and then hurry away."

"Where I take him?"

"This way," and the woman grasped his arm in the darkness and drew him along the hall.

But three other forms stole in behind them, the door was closed and dark lanterns were sprung and light flashed upon the scene, while Nat said sternly:

"You are my prisoner, madam!"

"Make no outcry."

But outcry she did make, for she called out

"Oh, Jack! the law-hounds are upon us."

"Yes, your house is entirely surrounded—resistance will be your death," cried Nat, and he threw open the door leading into the rear room.

There was a bright light there, though none shone without, and three men were seated at a table eating supper.

They had attempted a show of resistance, but had no weapons and the words of New York Nat checked them.

"Come out one by one!" ordered Nat, as he slipped the steel bracelets upon the woman, and the men obeying they were also quickly ironed, one of them growling forth:

"Curse you, Mollie! see what your love of dress has done for us."

The Boy Police hung back in the dark hall, keeping their bull's-eyes turned upon the gang, and to make matters more sure, Nat ordered the men to be manacled around the feet also.

They were cool fellows and though very pale, took their surprise quietly, one of them remarking:

"See what it is to leave our weapons behind when we came to supper, for I believe a bold dash would have saved us."

"Yes, and that is a flesh mask that fellow wears."

"And the others are also masked."

"Who are you?"

"Cops," was Nat's reply, and he went up-stairs with Keno, leaving Doc and Parson to guard the prisoners.

The discovery they made was a valuable one, for a wooden partition in the wall was let down like a table, and it revealed a secret receptacle, in which were various utensils of the counterfeiters' trade.

On the table was a press and plates; there were molds, coins, a furnace, bars of metal, and pads of paper.

The whole revealed a complete outfit of counterfeiters, and Nat said dryly:

"They make good money, and I've got four hundred dollars and it's hard to tell it from the real."

"Now to get back the things I sold her, for they may be needed again."

A short search in the woman's room revealed the purchases she had made from Nat as a peddler, and they were quickly bundled up.

Then the prisoners were ironed to the chairs they were made to sit in, and with the lamp burning the Boy Police left the cottage, leaving the impression, however, that they were still on guard.

The door was locked, Nat taking the key and Doc and Keno were left on guard outside until the real officers should arrive, when they would quietly get away.

Then the Boy Police made their way to their respective haunts, New York Nat going down-town with all haste.

He went at once to the home of Walter Vanderlip, and at his ring the door was opened.

"I was expecting you, Nat, having received your letter."

"Come in," said Walter Vanderlip.

In Nat went and handing the key of the counterfeiters' cottage to Mr. Vanderlip, he asked if he could sit down and write a statement.

This he did, and armed with it Mr. Vanderlip at once went to the nearest Police Headquarters and from there sent officers up to the cottage to secure the prisoners and get the proofs of their crime, while Nat hastened back to his lonely quarters and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE NIGHT-WATCH.

WHEN the chief of the Secret Service Bureau went down to his Headquarters, the morning after the raid upon the counterfeiters, he was surprised at the news awaiting him.

A woman and three men had been taken during the night and locked up, and a search of their home had revealed that they were a band of counterfeiters of paper, gold and silver money.

They were unknown to the police as such, save one, who had eluded arrest as a crook, and upon whose head there was a reward of a thousand dollars.

The chief was delighted with this capture, and when asked what lucky officer had made the capture, he was referred to a communication on his desk.

"The Unknown Ferret again, by all that's good!" he cried, and breaking the seal he read:

"Getting word of a counterfeiters' nest, I decided to rob it.

"By a trick, playing peddler, I got at the truth and the situation, the woman paying me in counterfeit money for the purchases she made.

"Those purchases I took back for future use; but all else was left as I found it.

"There is a reward for one of the counterfeiters, so please add it to the bank account of

Yours,

"THE UNKNOWN."

"Who brought this?" asked the chief.

"It was sent by a messenger, sir, along with a note from your friend Mr. Vanderlip."

"Ah!" and the chief took up the note and read:

"MY DEAR CHIEF:—

"I send the Unknown's report beneath.

"I will drop in on you and shed what other light I can upon the affair, which was a clean sweep for my mysterious Ferret friend.

Yours, W. V."

Walter Vanderlip did drop in on the chief, and they talked over the matter together, all the details being gone into as New York Nat had made them known.

"Of course, Vanderlip, these captures of my Unknown Ferret are wonderfully clever, and he is deserving of all praise; but still I must say that I do not like his secrecy with me," said the chief.

"He has, as I said before, his own reasons for remaining unknown, but in time all will be made clear to you," answered Vanderlip, and then he added:

"I have some more news for you."

"Well?"

"You have a woman in jail as an accomplice of the murderer of a Mr. Dunn?"

"Yes."

"You deem her guilty?"

"Circumstantial evidence surely points that way."

"Well, I am going to ask you if you will remain here at your office on Sunday night until you hear from me, and mind you, chief, that does not mean that I am to be shadowed, for, by trying to find out who the Secret Ferret is, you may prevent good work from being done."

"My word for it, I will not have you shadowed on Sunday night, Mr. Vanderlip."

"Thank you, and let me say that there will be two cases of interest for you, both widely different, and, from what I learn, they will surprise you greatly."

"I like surprises."

"You have Bolton, the cashier of Leech & Gorman, under arrest, I believe."

"Oh, yes, and yet somehow I cannot believe him guilty, for I know him well."

"Time will tell; but remember, Sunday night you will remain here until called up by telephone, or I come to see you."

"I will."

"And no shadowing of me."

"You have my word," was the answer, and Walter Vanderlip left the Headquarters and went for a horseback ride in Central Park.

In a secluded part of the Equestrian Path he met New York Nat, and the two held a

long conversation together, after which they went their separate ways.

It was Friday, and New York Nat was plotting for double work to be done on Sunday night.

Blow's report of the two men in his tenement-house, and the work they intended to do, must be attended to, and there was also the meeting at the Hotel V—of Flip's two friends to be looked after.

A special meeting of the Boys' League was called for Saturday night in the old mansion, and there it was arranged that Blow should shadow his two men to the spot they were going after the box spoken of, and as it was doubtless in the neighborhood of the murdered bachelor's house, Nat and others of the band would be on hand three to wait and watch for their coming.

Then Flip and a couple of his pals were to be on duty for the hotel catch.

Flip was to go on duty in the hotel that night, taking the place of one of the night bell-boys, and Doc and Parson had engaged the room adjoining the one appointed as the rendezvous between George Leech and Markham.

They had gone there on Saturday, and had bored a couple of gimlet holes high up in the door, so as to command a view of the room, and watching when the occupant was out, for Flip posted them, they had tried keys they had until they found one to unlock the door between, so that was all arranged.

With these arrangements all made, New York Nat patiently awaited the time to act.

Mr. Vanderlip had been notified of the moves on hand, and had promised that he would remain in his house and not retire until he heard from New York Nat.

He had been posted as to the room in the Hotel V—and also of the address of the tenement-house where Blow's two plotters stayed, so all that he would have to do would be to call up the chief, when he heard from New York Nat, and notify him to send officers to the two places and secure their men.

Sunday night came in dark and misty, and when the two plotters left their room, Blow was not far behind.

He was a good shadower and taking the same car that they did was of course not suspected by the two.

One of the men carried a basket, and the two talked together in a low tone.

They were hard-looking toughs, and Blow thought that he would not like to be caught out with them in the dark.

They left the car at a street far up-town and Blow did not get off until he felt that he would not be seen by them.

He soon caught up near enough to see them indistinctly in the distance ahead, and there he hung until the house of the murdered bachelor, Dunn, loomed up.

He saw the men leave the lane by getting over a fence on the right and going into a field.

Then he stood at the fence and watched them, and he nearly gave a cry aloud as a voice said at his side:

"They are at it, Blow."

"Oh, Cap'n Nat! you scared the wits out of me."

"I saw them come and you also."

"The boys are scattered about, two of them are lying in the field where those men are."

"They are digging up the box."

"Yes."

"But they have a basket to put the things in, and you had better go back on the car with them, for they saw me coming out."

"I'll be with them, Blow, while you now go back to your room and be there when they return, for we can do nothing with them here, and I can send the chief's detectives to catch them at their work of dividing the spoils."

"That's just the idea, for those men

would fight here and get us all in a scrape, for they are armed, as I saw them put on their revolvers," and Blow retraced his way back to the city, leaving New York Nat and the others on guard.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GUILTY ONES.

NOT one of New York Nat's well-trained boys moved from the position in which they had been placed, to await the signal to act.

They saw the men at work digging in the field, and they were ready to close in upon them.

But they did not get the signal, and so would not make a move.

The box was put back in the hole and covered up again, and with the basket on their arms they started back the way they had come.

The moment they did so, New York Nat had gone to one of his boys and told him to wait there and tell the others that a change of plan had been made, and they could return to the city and disperse for the night.

"We've got them, tell the boys, but will make no move here," and Nat hastened away up the lane.

A car passed as he got to the avenue, but he let it go by and when five minutes after the men came up they saw him running toward the car from another direction.

But he stopped and waited for the next and the three got on it together.

The basket, Nat noticed, appeared to be full of vegetables, as he could see under the lids, but this he knew was a blind to hide what it really did contain.

As they waited, Slim, another of Nat's boys came up, but gave no sign of recognition, and the pair got on the next car.

As they neared the Hotel V—Nat got up and went on the front platform, and Slim, having seen his sign, followed soon after, and heard the whispered words:

"I'll get off at the Hotel V—, you shadow them and go to Blow's room."

"The chief's men will soon be there."

Then Nat swung off of the car and sauntered into the hotel.

It was just ten o'clock, and he congratulated himself that he was on time for the appointment there.

He saw Flip in his bell-boy uniform, and going near him heard the words:

"He hasn't come yet."

"The boys are O. K."

Nat was dressed like a youth for a Sunday outing, and having gotten his boots blacked, for they needed it after his walk in the edge of the city, he walked up to the telephone, paid his fee of ten cents and asked for Number 1001.

He soon got it, and the following passed over the wires:

"Hello!"

"Yes. Hello!"

"Is that 1001?"

"It is."

"Who are you?"

"Walter Vanderlip, and I recognize your voice Nat."

"Yes, sir, and I called you up to say that if your friends will go to the tenement number we spoke of, they will find the two gentlemen at home, they having just arrived from the country with their baggage."

"All right, my friends will call at once, for they are anxious to meet those they have been expecting to arrive to-night."

"Is that all?"

"For the present it is, sir; but I will call you up again before long, I hope."

"I will be on hand near the 'phone."

"Good-night, sir."

"Good-night."

Then the telegram was rung off from the Hotel V—and the chief's Headquarters men called up.

"Hello, Vanderlip, that is your dulcet voice I hear?"

"Yes, sir, and I wished to say that the gentlemen you were expecting have just arrived from the country, and if you will send there, to the address and room I sent you to-night, you will find them at home."

"Thank you."

"Will send at once; but how about the others?"

"No word yet, but expected each moment."

"All right, call me up, for I'll be here."

"Better go there yourself, for it is on your way home."

"I will do so; but will I find my Unknown friend there awaiting me?"

"That I will not answer for—good-by for the present," was Walter Vanderlip's laughing reply, when he realized how anxious he was to catch the Unknown Ferret.

It was just a quarter of an hour after he had telephoned that Nat heard Flip whisper:

"He has just come and has gone up to the room!"

"Did the gentleman say he would see me?" asked Nat aloud of Flip.

"Yes, sir, he said walk up," and Flip led the way to the room in which Doc, Parson and Keno were there in ambush.

A knock at the door. It was opened by Keno, and Nat went in, while Flip remained outside to be on watch.

"He has come, and they are talking together. Doc has his eye at one gimlet hole, Parson his ear at another," whispered Keno.

"And the door between?"

"Is unlocked, but bolted on our side."

"All right," and Nat passed on into the bath-room, when Parson at once yielded his place to him.

He looked through the gimlet hole, then put his ear to it, and what he then saw and heard seemed to please him.

Getting down off the chair he slipped a mask, the same which only a close observer would observe was not the real face, with a mustache on it.

Then he put on a wig, and telling Doc and Parson to be ready, he left the room and went out in the hall.

Knocking at the door of the next room, while Flip watched in the corridor, a voice asked:

"Well, what is it?"

"A telegram for you, Mr. Markham."

The door was opened by the man for whom Flip had taken the note to George Leech.

Grasping the telegram he tore it open, turning to the light as he did so.

At once slipping into the room Nat closed and locked the door behind him!

There sat George Leech at the table, he having hastily thrown a silk handkerchief over something that was upon it.

"Mr. Markham, that telegram is a blank, but I want you and your friend there."

"Great God!" cried Markham, while Leech uttered an oath as he sprung to his feet.

But, the door of the adjoining room opened and in stepped Doc, Parson and Keno, also wearing the flesh masks which Nat had had so skillfully made as to look real.

"There is no use, gentlemen, for you have the proof of your guilt before you, that you robbed Leech & Gorman's safe, and put the apparent proof of guilt upon the cashier."

"There is the money as proof, which you are dividing to-night between you; and more you, Markham, have in your room here a white slouch hat, coat and spectacles, which you wore so that you might be mistaken for the cashier."

"Hold out your hands, gents, for I'm going to make you a present."

The two young men had sunk down upon the nearest seats, white-faced and dismayed.

Their crime had found them out, and they were utterly powerless to resist if they had chosen to do so.

"I will leave you here for the present, until further orders, but in the next room," and Nat here bundled all the money up in the silk handkerchief, tied it securely and wrote on a slip of paper a name.

Then he placed it upon the table in the next room, and, with other manacles ironed the two men together and to the table as well, leaving the money between them.

Locking the other room door on the inside he passed out through Markham's room with the words:

"My men will await in here the coming of the chief of detectives."

Then the Boy Ferrets slipped out quietly, locking the door after them.

Nat went at once to the office, while Doc and Parsons descended in the elevator, Keno waiting for another trip of it with Flip, who had been told to watch for the chief's coming.

Going to the telephone again Nat called up Mr. Vanderlip and said:

"Ask your friends to come to the Hotel V—Room 46. They will find those they expect awaiting them there."

"Ay ay; you have done well," answered Walter Vanderlip, and he once again called up the chief and repeated Nat's words.

"I'll go myself" was the answer.

"Then I will drop in and see you, if you wish."

"I do wish it."

"I have something to tell you of the other visit," said the chief, and the 'phone was rung off.

CONCLUSION.

It was just half-past one when the chief rung the door-bell at Walter Vanderlip's house.

He was met by Mr. Vanderlip, who had allowed his butler a night off, and the two went into the library together for a smoke and talk.

"Well, chief, did all pass out as we had hoped?"

"Better; for in each case, besides catching the worst kind of crooks, we have saved innocent parties from the brand of guilt resting upon them."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, my men went to the number of the room in the tenement, as directed, and broke in the door without knocking, for they felt sure of their game."

"There they found two men, both of them old offenders, one a burglar, the other an escaped convict."

"They had all the proof of their guilt before them, for they had a basket of silver plate and other things engraved with the name of Dunn."

"They had also a tin box with his name on it, containing jewelry, and paper, gold and silver money."

"What was more, they had the very knife that they had killed the poor fellow with, his blood still upon it!"

"Brought with their booty to Headquarters, the burglar broke down and said he was not sorry they had been caught, for the thought that a poor woman had been accused of the crime and might hang for it had tortured him greatly."

"I at once sent for the poor woman, had her brought before me, and then she told that the supposed tramp who had visited her was her own son, who, years before, had fled, believing he had killed a man."

"He had gone West and made money, and then came back to see his mother, and since her arrest only had she learned that the man was not dead whom her son supposed he had killed, but it was to protect him from arrest she had not told the truth, for all evidence seemed against him. His knife had been stained by cutting off the head of the chicken she had cooked for him."

"I had her sent to other quarters until the court sets her free, and the real murderers and robbers of the old bachelor were sent to

jail, one of them being his own brother, Caleb Dunn, who expected to get the property as the next heir, when he dared come forward to claim it."

"And so, your Unknown still does good work?" said Walter Vanderlip with a smile.

"Yes indeed! And more, he has saved the cashier of Leech & Gorman from prison, for he has most cleverly shown that the robbery was by a nephew of Mr. Leech, aided by another clerk in the bank, while they purposely fastened the guilt upon my poor friend."

"I am glad indeed that he escapes."

"Yes, and that the guilty must suffer."

"I found them in Markham's room at the hotel, ironed together and to the table as well."

"There, between them, was their plunder which they had not time to divide."

"A more pitiable looking pair I never saw; and oh, how they begged, offering their stealings to be allowed to go free!"

"I sent them to the lock-up, and then came to see you."

"You found no trace of the Unknown Ferret then?"

"Only his game, the boodle in a silk handkerchief, and on it the words:

"With the compliments of

"THE UNKNOWN."

"Well, chief, he seems to work to throw light in dark places, and to do so with success, while he also successfully eludes you."

"See here, Vanderlip, I believe I shall give up trying to track down my Unknown Ferrets, for these two murderers could tell me nothing of how they had been tracked, and Markham and Leech simply said that they had been surprised by several of my officers entering their room from the one adjoining and the hall, and making them prisoners."

"They were too much frightened to describe 'my officers,' as they called them, and there was not a photograph of an Unknown Ferret about that I could see when I got there, though they were doubtless around, laughing at me."

"No, I shall let them have their way at working secretly, until in their own time and way they choose to let me know who and what they are, and their reason for deceiving me as they have done."

"A wise decision, chief, for I assure you that only when the Unknown Ferrets get ready to make themselves known will you learn who they are. Save one, the leader doubtless, I do not even know who they are."

"Well, they shall have their own way," sighed the chief.

Then he continued:

"They have done splendid work. Their act in putting their grip upon the fiendish Grave Ghouls who have been robbing graves so frequently of late, is worthy of the highest praise, and I would be glad to take them cue and all upon my force unquestioned, for evidently no one knows the haunts of criminals in this city better than they."

"Yes, they shall have their own way, and I'll not ask you, their Arizona Ally, to betray them. Keep your faith with them and all will be right in the end, I am sure."

And have their way they did, rendering services again and again of the greatest value, and steadily building up fame and fortune for themselves under the leadership of their Masked Queen and their dauntless captain, New York Nat.

THE END.

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